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ABSTRACT

A project entitled "A Study of Bridging Courses for Women" investigated the curriculum and the context of courses within the further education sector that act as bridging courses for women and explored the needs of and difficulties faced by women who are reentering the labor force. After selecting 12 separate bridging courses as case studies, researchers employed the following methods to examine the courses: interviews held with course tutors and organizers, observation of course teaching, and questionnaires administered to and discussions held with students. Based on data from these sources, project researchers concluded that while bridging courses have had considerable success in providing women with an enjoyable experience, in helping them to return to study, and to regain their self-confidence, it appears that they are less successful in effecting substantial changes in women's attitudes and study or career choices or in helping them with their decision making in these areas. Therefore, project staff made a number of recommendations calling for curricular developments, changes in information and support services, and organizational improvements. These included calls for provision of a more widely based core curriculum of subjects in science and technology topics as well as improvement of course advertisement and outreach activities. (MN)

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Further Education Curriculum Review and Development Unit

PROJECT REPORT

FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES IN FOCUS

a study of bridging courses for women

by

Sheila M. Stoney and Margaret I. Reid

CE 033 173

Report of a project commissioned by FEU from
The National Foundation for Educational Research

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July 1980

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(2) determining priorities for action to improve the total provision and suggesting ways in which improvement can be effected

(3) carrying out specific studies, helping with curricular experiments, and contribution to the evaluation of objectives, and

(4) disseminating information about the process of curriculum development in FE.

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Geoffrey Melling
Director

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

The past decade has witnessed the widespread questioning and challenging of the position of women in society. Undoubtedly the feminist movement, which is even now little more than ten years old, has influenced attitudes, aspirations and actions whilst statutory measures (Equal Pay Act, 1973; Sex Discrimination Act, 1975) have sought to remedy some of the more apparent injustices. However, whilst an increasing number of women are entering or re-entering the labour force it appears that women still do not gain equal benefit from our educational provision and partly as a result of this occupy many of the lower paid jobs in the labour force hierarchy. Relatively few rise to managerial positions or enter science and technology careers whether at semi-skilled, technician or professional level. In short, it is frequently claimed that women form a major disadvantaged group in our society and the definition of disadvantaged proferred by the Russell Committee (HMSO 1973) with reference to adult education is pertinent here:

> 'the term disadvantaged should be construed to include not only the physically and mentally handicapped but also those who, on account of their limited educational background, present cultural or social environment, age, location, occupations or status, cannot easily take part in adult education as normally provided.'

The Russell Report, however, had little to say on educational issues relating specifically to women.

If discussion and questioning are a necessary prelude to change, then research into the best ways of effecting developments out of the present provision would seem to be a prudent requisite before the action takes place. Considerable evidence is already available on the differing aptitudes, aspirations and attainments of boys and girls at school and the subtle effects of the 'hidden curriculum'. Until the last couple of years, however, there has been little study within the Further Education sector of issues relating to the specific educational and vocational needs of adult women and how successfully the present provision provides them with the necessary skills and confidence to enter or re-enter the spectrum of occupations which comprises the job market. The Bridging Courses for Women Project is just one of several recent research initiatives which have explored different aspects of this problem. The emphasis of the present research has been to examine in some detail a relatively new and specialised set of courses which are thought to be particularly geared to the educational/vocational needs and life styles of adult women.

1.2 'Bridging Courses'

Implicit in the word 'bridge' is the idea of a passage between two points and in 'bridging' some mechanism which facilitates the journey across a divide (Oxford English Dictionary). In 'Bridging Courses for Women' the passage referred to is that between home life and a new or first career, perhaps by way of further study or training, or even that between different careers. The facilitating mechanism is any type of educational/vocational provision which particularly helps women to make the often difficult crossing more easily.

From a review of the relevant literature and discussion with those involved with provision for adults, it was obvious that the term 'bridging course' does not, as yet, have a wide currency in educational circles, either here or abroad. The only written mentions of the phrase, other than in relation to the present research, were found in Byrne (1978) and in Rose's (1977) evaluation of American Community College courses for mature women. Indeed, on first contacting colleges for information it was often necessary to provide tutors with an explanation of its meaning. An umbrella term such as bridging courses is useful, however, as a description of the varied opportunities which exist for adults who wish to make a new start in life, and particularly as these courses appear under a bewildering number of different names. The term is also useful in enabling courses specifically for adults to be distinguished from 'link courses' of somewhat similar literal meaning, which have become associated with courses for young people which are jointly organised ventures between schools and colleges. On purely personal preference the term 'bridging course' is also preferred to its stark synonyms, 're-entry' or 'orientation' course, both of which are common in the American literature.

1.3 Scope of the Study

1.3.1 General

Bridging courses, broadly interpreted, include a wide spectrum of opportunities ranging from those which are almost entirely academic in their curriculum to those which have a specific vocational or training aim and are based at non-college sites such as Skill Centres. They may encompass courses of widely varying level and intensity, from those which simply equip their students for a non-advanced course to those which take them into degree level work. The courses may be full- or part-time, of only a few days length to one or two years in duration and may involve retraining, updating or upgrading at non-skilled, skilled or professional level. It was apparent then that, in order to design a research project of manageable proportions, certain constraints would have to be applied to the proposed field of study. Those opportunities which were felt to be outside the scope of the present study are outlined in the following paragraphs.

1.3.2 Training opportunities

Such specifically training initiatives as the Training Opportunities Scheme programmes (TOPS) organised by the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) have been excluded as have those organised by the Industrial Training Boards. The MSC is, or has been, involved with several research projects relating to women's vocational opportunities (MSC 1975, 1979(a), 1979(b)) and it was not felt appropriate to duplicate this work.

It is not always easy, however, to make an absolute separation between 'vocational' or 'training' courses and 'non-vocational' or 'educational' opportunities. Britain is, in fact, one of the few European countries which makes such a distinction amongst its tertiary provision, although it is generally accepted that many courses are composed of a varying mixture of educational and vocational elements. The Russell Report (1973) provides a particularly pertinent comment on this issue:

> 'It has often been represented to us in evidence that what makes a course of study vocational or not is the student's motive for taking it: if he takes it to qualify for a job it is vocational; if he takes it for the pure love of learning it is not, whatever the subject.'

Implicit within the title 'bridging courses' is the concept of an active stratagem which helps people to 'qualify for a job' rather than a passive facility which simply cultivates 'pure learning'. The research has shown that almost all bridging courses (excepting those in adult education institutes which may be subject to different regulations) are classified as 'vocational' and therefore able to receive certain dispensations, relative to non-vocational opportunities, such as lower levels of fees.

1.3.3 Professional and/or degree level courses

It was felt that those women who had already undertaken or were immediately capable of undertaking professional or degree level work were those in least need of an introductory bridging course. Hence courses geared for such a clientele were excluded in order that more emphasis could be placed on opportunities for women who had few academic attainments and previous career achievements. Professional-level retraining, updating and career development opportunities were also excluded.

1.3.4 Women's studies courses

Women's studies courses were not considered to be bridging courses in that they are essentially non-vocational in outlook and do not have an in-built aim of helping women towards a career or even further study or training. In a discussion paper appearing in a recent edition of the Women's Studies Newsletter (W.E.A. 1979) women's studies are defined broadly as involving:

> '.... ways of looking at the whole area of sex role stereotyping of women and men with particular regard to the effect of women's changing social roles.'

In the same paper the authors point out that the term has become 'interpreted in different ways by different groups; as consciousness-raising exercises by the Women's Movement and as academic research projects in further and higher education'. As consciousness-raising exercises women's-studies lectures or discussions can form one particularly useful element in the curriculum of a bridging course by encouraging women, who may not have had the benefit of a wide-ranging education, to question their position in life and to raise their aspirations.

1.3.5 'O' and 'A' level courses for mature students

Many bridging opportunities do prepare their students for 'O' or 'A' level qualifications although there is usually no compulsion on individuals to take the end-of-course exam/s. Mature students are often placed in an invidious position as far as gaining 'marketable qualifications' are concerned although this is the goal to which most ultimately aspire. In their book Learning Later, Hutchinson and Hutchinson (1978) talk of the 'GCE route march', geared really only for the athletic 16-19 year olds, which many mature students are forced to take in order to conform to traditional expectations of academic attainment.

It was decided that those courses which offered only a standard 'O' or 'A' level syllabus without any additional support services built in or around the curriculum should not fall within the scope of the project. Also excluded were 'courses' which were really no more than a facility for mature students to sit-in on, or attend part of, one or more mainstream college course.

1.3.6 Students below the age of twenty one

There is some disparity amongst local authorities in their identification of a 'mature' or 'adult' student. Mature entrants in some authorities, such as the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), are designated as being those of age 25 or above; in others the lower age limit is 21. In the present study the target group was women of age 21 and over who had had a break between school and college, polytechnic or university. It was not thought necessary to specify a minimum length for this interruption in their education.

1.4 Definition of Bridging Courses

Having thus reduced the field of research the following definition of bridging course appropriate to the terms of the project was arrived at:

> 'a bridging course is any educational opportunity which helps a mature person to take the first step towards either further study or training, a new or first job or career'.

It may seem surprising that the definition fails to mention the words 'woman' or 'women'. In fact almost all bridging courses, even those entitled 'New Opportunities for Women', must be open to both men and women unless the course has been especially 'designated' under Clause 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act, which provides for separate training opportunities to be made available for men and women under certain circumstances. The term 'training' is used in the Act to mean 'training for work' and, as such, includes educational courses which help students towards this goal. As only one course has been identified which has received the said designation, it might be more appropriate to talk of bridging courses as being 'suitable for' rather than 'for' women. However, a number of bridging courses which are particularly suitable for women do in practice attract an all-female response. There is currently some debate on the subject of whether or not certain courses should be only for women; this and related issues will be discussed in more detail later in the report.

1.5 Categories of Course

1.5.1 General

Earlier in the introduction it was indicated that bridging courses of quite different characteristics exist. After exploring the curricula and structures which lay beneath the identity tags of various courses it was realised that these courses could not be categorized on name alone. Similar names did not necessarily imply courses of similar curricula, while courses of broadly comparable content were hidden beneath a variety of titles. Such confusion probably arises from the different, and physically separate, influences which have initiated many bridging courses. Only in the last two years has an effective start been made on bringing together those interested or involved in provision for mature students and women in particular.

After exploring the field in some depth it was felt that it was more useful to group courses into two broad categories, based on aims as well as content, rather than attempt to make uneasy divisions into smaller classifications.

1.5.2 Return-To-Study courses (RTS)

These aim to help women (and men) to return to and increase their ability to study by providing a general, basic syllabus which includes study skills and subjects such as sociology, psychology and politics, which may not have been encountered via a previous school curriculum. RTS courses usually provide the opportunity for students to take one or more specialist options concurrent with, or subsequent to, the main syllabus.

1.5.3 Return-To-Work courses (RTW)

The second group of courses is more specifically geared to the needs of women, particularly to those who don't really know what they want to do, and aims to help them look beyond the classroom to the world of work and a possible new or first job or career. The curriculum of such courses includes information on study and job opportunities and the practicalities of returning to work, communication skills, counselling and confidence building.

The name most commonly associated with the RTW courses is 'New Opportunities for Women' (NOW), after the original course of that name at Hatfield Polytechnic. However, the curriculum of some NOW courses appears to differ markedly from the original model, especially those at university extra-mural departments, and they may have an academic content which is well above the level of that offered by some RTS courses. Also included in the RTW group are the 'Wider Opportunities for Women' (WOW) courses, sponsored by the MSC, which in addition to the usual RTW curriculum have an element of job sampling and work experience.

1.6 The Target Group

1.6.1 Women's life styles and career patterns

Compared with the majority of men who join the labour force after school, college or university and remain there, working full-time until they are of retiring age, women display much more varied life and career patterns. A woman's working life will probably be interrupted for an indeterminate period at one or more points in her career because of marriage, bringing up a family, moving location to accommodate her husband's (rather than her own) job requirements or nursing a sick relative. If she left school at 16, married early and had a family soon after marriage her job aspirations may be scarcely formulated when she decides to start or return to work. If she has worked continuously, or at least until her marriage or the birth of her children, it may have been at shop-floor level, not because of lack of ability but rather for want of motivation and encouragement while a teenager. Contributing towards this may have been poor careers guidance at school or the influence of the school's 'hidden curriculum' which constrained her ambitions, or the form of its curricular organisation which limited her subject choice. With reference to more senior appointments Moore (1977) has talked of the 'illogical career patterns' which many women have developed by the time they come to apply for senior or managerial posts, thus placing them at a marked disadvantage relative to male applicants.

1.6.2 Women returners

Whatever the reason for a woman's break from employment it is almost certain that, either as a person or in terms of her job or career prospects, she will not be in the same position as a returner as when she previously worked. The reasons for this may be several:

(i) Change in Aspirations and Motivation. As a direct result of experiences while away from work she may feel that she no longer wishes to be involved in the same job as previously, or even the same level of job. On the one hand she may want less demanding work, possibly part-time, which could be timetabled to fit in with family commitments. Alternatively she may have developed, with more maturity, wider aspirations than those held previously and feel that the time has come for her to establish her own study/career base outside family life.

(ii) Employers' Attitudes. Although as well qualified as applicants of similar age she may lack, or appear to lack, even after a short break, the commensurate experience. A discontinuous employment profile is not often attractive to prospective employers who may feel, often wrongly, that women returners' promotion potential and commitment to the job are lower than that of other employees. As a result she may be forced to accept a job of lower responsibility than she held previously.

(iii) Change in the Job Market. The career upon which she originally embarked may have changed so that she is out of date with developments. More seriously, opportunities in her chosen career (especially if it was either teaching or nursing) may have narrowed or become practically non-existent so that only those who have a record of continuous employment and success have a chance for any vacancy which appears. Alternatively good opportunities in new industrial and commercial enterprises may have developed for which she could apply if she was prepared to take the necessary further study or training required.

1.6.3 The target population

While it is relatively easy to identify the groups of women who might benefit from a bridging course, it is very difficult to identify the actual numbers which form the potential student reservoir. The most recent statistics available for mid-1977, published by HMSO (HMSO 1979(a), 1979(b) and 1979(c)), estimate that in Britain out of 29 million women (20 million over the age of 21) approximately 9.3 million (42 per cent of the female population) are employed. These form some 40 per cent of the total working population of the United Kingdom - and approximately two thirds of all working women are married.

Although the female economic activity rate in Britain is one of the highest in Western Europe (especially over the age range 35 to 39 years) and the percentage of women in the labour force is still increasing, albeit more slowly than formerly (HMSO 1979(c)), there are still vast numbers of women who are not working. Of these the number who would like to work or at least to take the first step and embark on further study or training given the opportunity and/or the encouragement is unknown. There are also those who are working part-time in jobs which do not utilise their full capabilities. Britain has one of the highest percentages in Europe of women who work part-time, but again there are few clues to the numbers who are not at present finding sufficient job satisfaction and are looking for ways to improve the situation. A further group of potential bridging-course students, who out of sheer economic necessity may need to work, are women who are single (9 million), widowed (3 million), separated or divorced (0.5 million) and especially those who have dependent children. With reference to the last point it has been estimated that there are approximately 1.2 million one-parent families in the United Kingdom, most of whom are headed by a woman.

Clearly to break down the target population into groups of known or even estimated size, containing only those women who are over the age of 21, is not a feasible exercise here. It is also doubtful whether such an exercise would do much to indicate the true extent of potential demand for bridging courses since the target population is not only 'hidden' in terms of unidentifiable numbers but also because of its lack of assertiveness. Although the feminist movement may have gone some way to raising consciousness amongst women, many who are isolated in a family environment or in an unsatisfactory job and would most benefit from a bridging course are also some of the least vocal and least well-informed. This problem has already been identified by the Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education (ACACE) in its discussion paper, 'Towards Continuing Education', ACACE (1979(a)):

> '.... experience shows that in adult education demand is more often latent than explicit. People will rarely demand what is not already provided. But, once the provision is laid on, demand follows on a large scale.'

CHAPTER TWO

THE RESEARCH PLAN

2.1 Project Aims

'A Study of Bridging Courses for Women' was a one-year project which started in January of 1979. The project was designed with the following aims:

(i) to study the curriculum and the context of courses within the Further Education sector which act as bridging courses for women;

(ii) to highlight curricular issues which relate to the needs of mature women students and examine the extent to which bridging courses provide women returners with the necessary confidence and skills to enter employment, further training or study courses;

(iii) to explore the attitudes and intentions of both course organisers and students;

(iv) to ascertain whether women returners enter traditional or non-traditional areas of female employment and assess the influence of bridging courses upon their career decisions.

(v) to conduct a review of bridging opportunities available for women overseas.

As the aims suggest, the study was more concerned with the curricular and organisational characteristics of bridging courses and the needs of, and difficulties faced by, women returners, than with locating every known bridging opportunity. It was necessary in the first instance, however, to identify as many courses as possible which were running within the timetable of the project in order that the range of opportunities available was known, if not the full number.

2.2 Location of Bridging Courses

Locating bridging courses was found to be no easy matter for a number of reasons:

(i) The shorter courses often run spasmodically, not necessarily during each academic term and are particularly susceptible to closure and, even if proposed, may not even get off the ground. Whether such a course is actually in operation or not, therefore, may not be common knowledge within a college.

(ii) The term 'bridging course' is not as yet in common usage.

(iii) The course may not appear in the main college prospectus and the actual course venue may be outside college grounds.

(iv) The courses are run under a bewildering number of names, by a variety of college departments, so that there is no easily identifiable common source of information within the colleges. Neither college switchboards nor registrar's departments were found to be particularly useful when a general enquiry about bridging-course provision was directed towards them.

With these problems in mind, and after consulting other researchers in the field, it was decided that attempts to locate bridging courses via a circular to colleges, directed to the principals, would not produce worthwhile results within the time available. It was decided, therefore, to compile a working list of courses out of other such lists already available and to verify the existence of each named course by telephoning the colleges directly and attempting to locate the course tutor concerned. The main sources used for the working list were:

(i) The Editorial Bulletin, 'Second Chance Education', written for Good Housekeeping Magazine by Ruth Miller, Miller (1978)*

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*new edition available for 1979

(ii) The 'Second Chance: New Opportunities for Mature Students' section of the Directory of Further Education, Careers Research and Advisory Council (1978/79)*

(iii) A list called 'Courses Suitable for Women Returning to Study', dated 24th November 1976 and provided by Ruth Michaels of Hatfield Polytechnic.

(iv) A short list of up-to-date 'New Opportunities for Women' (NOW) courses provided by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC).

(v) A verified list of NOW and Return-To-Study courses provided by Grace Atkins, Information Officer at the National Institute of Adult Education and Enid Hutchinson of Richmond Adult College.

(vi) Personal communications from other researchers, organisations and college personnel involved in provision for mature students.

2.3 Project Groundwork

Because there was relatively little written material pertaining to bridging courses available at the start of the study, it was initially necessary to identify by additional means some of the more important issues which might have some bearing on the subject. In order to gain this information rapidly a series of visits were made to seven colleges currently running a bridging course which were located within easy travelling distance of the project's base. The information and experience gained as a result of these visits and also from further discussions held with others who had some relevant expertise, helped in the formulation of the conceptual basis for the research.

2.4 Selection of Case Studies

After completing the groundwork phase which lasted three months, a discussion was held with our sponsors, the Further Education

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*new edition available for 1979

Curriculum Review and Development Unit of the DES, relating to the selection of bridging courses for more detailed case-study work. The case studies were to occupy most of the project's time for the remainder of the year. It was decided that the approach which would yield the most useful information within the limited time available would be to make a selection of bridging courses of a disparate nature. It was felt that the selection should include both Return-To-Work and Return-To-Study courses of differing curricula, teaching styles and emphases and those providing a general as well as a more specialised educational experience. It was also seen to be important to include courses of varying timetable and structure, including part-time, full-time and residential courses in addition to those involving an element of private study at home. The list of selected opportunities comprises:

(i) A RTS course in an adult study environment within a suburban setting.

(ii) two RTS courses set in a socially and racially mixed inner city area.

(iii) part-time and full-time RTS courses which are specifically geared to helping mature students to increase their ability in science.

(iv) an example of an 'Open College' course.

(v) study courses within a college which provides 'FlexiStudy' facilities.

(vi) a RTW course within an area of good job opportunities for women.

(vii) NOW and 'Polymaths' courses in a polytechnic setting.

(viii) a NOW-type course for one-parent families.

(ix) RTS courses with an academic bias within a long-term residential college.

(x) an example of a Pre-school Playgroup Leaders' course: such courses may act as an initial bridging course for many thousands of women.

Further descriptions of these courses are given in Chapter Four.

2.5 Case Study Methodology

Each case study was approached in the following ways:

(i) interviews were held with course tutors or organisers and any other college staff involved;

(ii) observation of the course teaching was carried out;

(iii) questionnaires were administered to and discussions held with the students.

After all the customary permissions for entry into the colleges had been obtained from local authorities and college principals there was approximately half of the Summer term 1979 available for case-study fieldwork. It was seen as important to administer questionnaires towards the end of each course, rather than near the beginning, so that students would be able to comment on the course on the basis of their experience of it. Accordingly questionnaires were prepared in time to reach students on those courses terminating in the Summer term. Also in the Summer term most of the initial interviews with college tutors were completed so that sufficient time would be available in the Autumn to concentrate on course observation and the remaining student questionnaires and discussions. It should also be mentioned that gathering information on British opportunities for mature women, outside the selected case studies, was seen as an on-going task of the project so that the case studies could be placed in a broader perspective. For the same reason, discussions with other researchers and those interested in the field of continuing education continued throughout the life of the project.

2.6 Interviews with College Personnel

The initial interview with the course tutor/s or organiser/s was arranged on a semi-structured basis with a check-list of topics for discussion being prepared in advance so that a core of comparable information resulted from each interview. This check-list was standard for all colleges. Where tutors had a particular expertise or point of view this was explored in more depth and recorded in the report of each interview. Other discussions with college staff tended to be on a more informal and wide-ranging basis. These were felt to be useful in providing a rounded picture of the course and its context. At the initial meeting course leaflets and any other written information and materials relating to the course were collected.

2.7 Observation of Course Teaching

The curriculum observations were seen to be a particularly important element of the study. It was hoped that the project might be able to compensate, in some small way, for the dearth of knowledge which exists on the learning needs and difficulties of mature women and how they react to various curricula and classroom teaching styles.

It was thought initially that the researcher should only become involved with each class as a non-participant observer and, with this strategy in view, a simple classroom observation schedule was devised. It was soon found, however, that this approach was unsuited to the type of classes under study, in which class sizes were often small and the students relatively timid and wary of outsiders joining their course. The strategy adopted thereafter was for the researcher to become involved with the class simply as a student, sitting amongst other students and with them taking lecture notes or working out set exercises.

By this means it was easier to become assimilated into the class and possible to gain a better appreciation of student problems and learning difficulties. At the close of each class any queries or points of interest were discussed with the teacher and a short report was written up as soon as possible afterwards. These reports outlined the sequence of classroom activities and topics covered, student and teacher comments and any other relevant information.

Because the courses varied so much in character it was not practical to attend a set number of classes for each course, especially where students were taking a varying mix of subject options or did most of their studying at home. An attempt was made to cover at least one or two whole sessions of the course, whether it lasted for a morning, an evening or a whole day, so that, where appropriate, several different classes from each course could be observed. Where two observational visits were made these were timed at different stages of the course so that some idea of the students' and the course's development could be obtained.

2.8 Student Questionnaires

The aim of the questionnaire was to gather information on students' perceptions of the course and their reasons for attending it, and what they hoped to do after it was finished. A pilot version was devised and administered to a group of mature students at a college outside the case-study sample. After completing the questionnaires the students were asked to give their views on its strengths and weaknesses. As a result of this exercise a revised version was produced (Appendix 1) for the main sample.

The questionnaire was designed to be broadly applicable to all students and to be completed by both men and women with a view to comparing their responses to different questions. However, because quite a number of the courses in 1978/79 had an all-female take-up, and on others the men voiced some diffidence, even amusement about filling in the questionnaires, only the data from female respondents are presented in this report.

The questionnaire was divided into four sections concerned with The Course, Intentions, Finance and Travel and Background Information. The first section dealt with curricular issues which might affect students; which parts/subjects they found the most valuable, which the most difficult and the degree to which they felt that an appropriate balance amongst different topics had been achieved. Within the Intentions section the future plans of students after the course ended were explored. In the third section financial and travelling problems were highlighted, while in the last section the students were asked to provide background information on themselves and their past experience and qualifications. These questions were asked in order that a profile of students attending the different bridging opportunities could be built up and an assessment made of the types of women who are attracted to these opportunities.

On the whole the questionnaire appeared to work well as relatively few inappropriate responses or completion errors were found when the questionnaires were analysed. From the responses to the open-ended questions it was obvious that students were able to identify factors which particularly helped or hindered their progress and ways in which the course might be improved.

It was necessary to adopt a flexible approach to the distribution and analysis of the questionnaires, again because of the varying nature of the courses. For some courses it was more convenient to administer questionnaires to students in person, in other cases, where students undertook a differing range of options, questionnaires were distributed by the course tutor and in certain instances where students had only limited contact with the college the questionnaires were sent directly to students by post. Because of the gradual tail-off in student numbers attending some of the chosen courses (due to a variety of factors) and the well-known reluctance of people to return questionnaires when they have been administered through a third party or by post, the overall response rate aimed at was 50 per cent. For most courses this was not only achieved but surpassed although no questionnaires were returned by one of the sample colleges. In all 174 questionnaires were returned from women students.

2.9 Belfast Case Study

This case study was different from the others in that it concentrated on a variety of opportunities for women within Belfast rather than just one. It was not practical within a single visit of only a few days duration to attempt classroom observations or to give out questionnaires to students. The emphasis, therefore, was placed on the providers of bridging courses and the type and context of the provision. In order to gain the maximum value from the visit the trip was timed to coincide with a local conference entitled 'Adult Education, People and Work', held at one of the city's further education colleges. In addition to the conference, visits were made to two other further education institutions which make widely differing provision for mature women and to the Educational Guidance Service for Adults in the centre of Belfast which has an international reputation. Informal meetings were also held with members of the local Workers Educational Association and the Northern Ireland Region of the Open University. The information gathered from the Belfast visit is used in the report in a general context; individual colleges and courses have not been described.

2.10 Review of Provision Overseas

Apart from concentrating upon case studies, the other main work of the project was a review of the provision made overseas for bridging-type opportunities for women. The aim of this task was to look for examples of good or innovatory practice and provision which might be pertinent to the future development of British provision and to compare current foreign initiatives with our own. Such a review might also be particularly welcome at a time when British opportunities within the field of continuing education remain relatively uncoordinated and there is little information available on the alternative types of opportunities available for adults.

In order to tap the potentially massive American literature on continuing education, an on-line search was made of the relevant data using the NFER's terminal connected to the Educational Research Information Centre (ERIC) in California. The results of this search provided a wealth of information on American provision. Because data retrieval facilities are much less well developed on the continent it was more difficult to gain access to information on European provision. In addition to utilising research contacts working on the continent, information was collected via Embassy library services and other international organisations. The results of this review are discussed in Chapter Five of the report.

CHAPTER THREE

OVERVIEW OF EXISTING PROVISION

3.1 Origins and Growth

3.1.1 General

Among the influences which have led to the introduction and growth of bridging courses two movements have played a major part:

(i) the movement towards continuing or recurrent education,

(ii) the long-standing trend towards equal rights and opportunities for men and women of which the feminist movement has been the most strident element within the last ten years.

The need for continuing education has recently been emphasised by the ACACE publication (1979(a)) where it has been stated that, '.... education should not stop when school or even university ends but continue throughout life; that it should concern forty, fifty, even seventy-year-olds as much as eighteen-year olds'. There are those, however, who prefer to use the phrase 'recurrent education', believing that 'we place too much emphasis on education as a preparation for life... and not enough on the idea that in a changing society, educational needs recur throughout an individual's life.* Within the concept of recurrent education is the ideal that people should have the right to paid educational leave and other facilities in order to be able to take up these opportunities when the need arises. Other terms which express similar ideas of making special provision for adults are 'lifelong learning', 'education permanente', 'post-initial, post-compulsory or post-experience education'.

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*information sheet (undated) for the Association of Recurrent Education.

While the term 'continuing education' has undoubtedly come from across the Atlantic, the movement in Britain has grown out of the experience of those who have been involved with mature students and have foreseen that special developments were required beyond the existing provision in Further Education (which was mainly geared to the needs of young students) and the non-vocational courses by adult education centres. This also applies to those courses particularly geared to the needs of women where the real initiatives have come from experienced tutors who have perceived gaps in their provision rather than from those who have been involved in the feminist movements and are seeking radical change. A consequence of this in the view of one provider was that equal opportunities tended to be 'implicit' rather than 'explicit' in bridging-course curricula. However, it is undoubtedly true that the influence of those concerned with equal opportunities for men and women has been felt throughout the field of continuing education, whether it be in the colleges, on policy-making and advisory committees or amongst the student body itself.

3.1.2 Support and initiatives

3.1.2.1 non-college based

Support of a verbal, financial and/or research and information-giving nature for bridging-type provision has come from a variety of sources other than the institutions themselves. Some of these sources include:

(i) Advisory Council on Adult and Continuing Education
(ii) Associations for Recurrent and Continuing Education
(iii) Equal Opportunities Commission
(iv) Manpower Services Commission
(v) National Institute of Adult Education

(vi) The Open University

(vii) Russell Committee on Adult Education

(viii) Workers Educational Association

In Britain, meanwhile, the report of the Russell Committee on adult education in 1973 and the Venables Report of the Open University Committee on Continuing Education, 1976, have led to a deepening understanding of the needs of adult students and resulted in the setting up of ACACE in 1977. The Russell Report, however, as already noted, did not focus on educational issues relating to women. In 1975 the EOC was established and since then has played a considerable role in bringing together those interested in bridging-course provision for women. During 1978 and 1979 the Commission helped to sponsor 'New Opportunities for Women' conferences in England*, Scotland and Wales. In these years also the Commission published 'Fresh Start', a short but widely distributed guide on training and educational opportunities for women seeking a new job. In 1975 the then Department of Employment produced a series of publications entitled 'Women and Work' which provided an overview of the situation, here and abroad, of women in relation to the labour market. The MSC has now become the national agency concerned with initiatives in this field. As stated earlier, it has been involved with much research into vocational training opportunities for women and in 1978 began a pilot scheme of 'Wider Opportunities for Women' (WOW) bridging courses aimed at helping mature women to move into non-traditional occupations.

The Workers Educational Association (WEA), which is well-known for its outreach programmes held in neighbourhood centres, has become involved in running women's courses in addition to acting as co-sponsor with a college or university extra-mural department for some of the NOW courses. To a lesser extent the Open University and the YWCA have also begun to co-sponsor such courses. The Open University, however, has been more valuable to bridging courses in an advisory capacity. The expertise built up within the Open University, and the National Extension College, for counselling mature students and producing curricula suitable for them has been called upon by college tutors and others wishing to make special provision for adults. The Open University, through its own evaluation unit, has also been active in assessing the differing performance of its male and female students (McKintosh 1978). Some of the Return-To-Study type of courses are located at colleges which act as local study centres for the Open University and the resulting course curricula may be linked to one of the Open University Foundation courses. In a similar way 'Pre-TOPS' courses have grown up at a number of centres. These aim to provide an educational boost for students wishing to go on a TOPS training course. The Adult Literacy movement has also been the initiating influence for certain bridging courses. Some courses were originally developed to help students to move from remedial study to normal, mainstream classes. Not surprisingly, such general study opportunities have attracted other adults who want to take an introductory course before attempting more specialised options.

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*EOC/University of Manchester (1979)

Finally, but by no means least, there has been a growing trend towards local initiatives for adults, many of which have been developed by groups of interested adult educationalists with very little financial support. Some of the more interesting examples of local provision are the relatively new educational guidance and counselling services for adults. These aim to help those who would like to, or need to, return to further study or training but are uncertain as to how to proceed. They provide the services of an experienced counsellor who has knowledge of local opportunities and can explore with the client the possibilities open to him or her. Information on local courses is of particular importance to married women with children who cannot travel far to college and who may be out-of-touch with suitable opportunities. These services may also be able to call upon the expertise of a trained psychologist who can administer aptitude and personality tests if necessary. Such support facilities are very much 'bridging' in outlook and for some students may even eliminate the need for a bridging course. It is very likely that these relatively low-cost ventures will form a vital link in future provision for adults although, at present, there are relatively few well-established units. The better examples, however, tend to be those which are supported by a college, polytechnic or university or by an umbrella organisation as in the case of the Educational Service for Adults in Belfast, which has been running for some fourteen years and is now supported by the Association for Recurrent Education and the Northern Ireland Council of Social Service. Other initiatives have emphasised an informal approach. These involve the taking of the expertise to the clientele by means of a mobile advisory unit or by establishing a temporary counselling clinic in a community centre (ACACE 1979(b)).

3.1.2.2 college-based

An early and major initiative in the provision of bridging courses was the establishment by Enid Hutchinson in 1966 of the first RTS course at the City Literary Institute. In 'Learning Later' Mrs. Hutchinson relates her experiences as tutor to the 'Fresh Horizons' courses which began as a single, part-time scheme, extended into day-time and evening courses and culminated in the introduction of a full-time course in 1973 for which ILEA provided discretionary student grants (Hutchinson and Hutchinson, 1978).

Five years later, the first of the Return-To-Work courses entitled 'New Opportunities for Women' was started at Hatfield Polytechnic in Hertfordshire by Ruth Michaels as a result of her experience of continuing education in Britain and America. In the introduction to a paper, Michaels (1973), the course is described as being:

> 'a comprehensive guide to the mature woman who may wish to return to active working life but is unsure or unaware of how best to do so. It aims to help the student to become acquainted with opportunities that exist for re-entry to education or retraining, for part-time or full-time employment, second careers or voluntary service. We also hope the course helps the student to gain new self-confidence, become aware of new horizons and establish long-term goals, based on her individual interests, abilities and aspirations.'

Both the Fresh Horizons courses at the City Literary Institute and the NOW courses at Hatfield Polytechnic have become models for subsequent bridging provision and are still sources of interest today. Some of the more recent initiatives are themselves the subject of reports and papers and will not be discussed in detail here. These include the 'Return-To-Work' courses run by the Extra-mural Department of Manchester University (Page 1976), the NOW courses at the Department of Adult Education in Newcastle University (Brown 1976(a), 1976(b) and 1977), the New Horizons courses at the Department of Extra-Mural Studies at Edinburgh University (MacDonald 1978), the Community Education Project in Belfast (Rowlands and Rowlands 1977) and the Wider Opportunities for Women courses organised by the MSC (Fairbairns 1979). Tutors concerned with 'FlexiStudy' courses have described their approach to help adults return to study (Barnet College 1978) and a further RTS scheme, currently the source of interest within the 'Open College' Federation, has recently been evaluated by researchers at Lancaster University.

While bridging courses have been growing in number and evolving in curriculum throughout the 1970's the provision still remains relatively uncoordinated. The current study found several instances of tutors developing new courses in semi-isolation from others, knowledge of their efforts remaining within the immediate environment of the college to which they were attached. This lack of coordination was partly responsible for the difficulty encountered in locating the courses for this study, as reported in Chapter Two. Only in the last two years have there been real moves to coordinate the different initiatives by organising conferences and workshops for tutors, producing lists of opportunities and publishing accounts of the courses themselves. A list of guides for returners and those who would like a change of career, which contains information on current bridging courses and the practicalities of returning to work or further study, is included in Appendix Two.

3.2 Current Provision

The aim of the sections which follow is to describe in some detail the general characteristics of the two major types of bridging courses using information from three sources:

(i) observations of teaching and discussions with tutors and students in the courses selected for intensive study or visited in the course of the research.

(ii) descriptions and evaluations of courses such as those referred to in Section 3.1.2.2 and listed at the end of the report.

(iii) discussions with HMIs, local authority advisers and inspectors and other researchers.

3.2.1 Return-To-Study courses

It is difficult to generalise about RTS opportunities because there is no such entity as a standard Return-To-Study course; all such courses have been differently flavoured by tutors' personal preferences and experiences. This is particularly true for the many bridging courses which are not aiming to meet the requirements of nationally-determined curricula and exams. Some tutors have even sought to design courses which provide alternative pathways to academic success for adults without the necessity to resort to the 'GCE route march' mentioned previously. From talking to tutors, however, there is no doubt that their aims for the courses are fundamentally similar and these can be summed up in the following terms: to provide study opportunities especially geared to the needs of adult men and women of differing experience and educational background who have not been studying for some time and need a gradual re-introduction to good study techniques. The strategies employed, therefore, have to be appropriate to mixed ability classes and tutors need to be prepared to cope with individual study problems as they arise.

If the woman (or man) needs a gradual re-introduction to studying, then the course cannot be particularly short. Most RTS courses, therefore, extend over half or a whole year allowing time for students to develop their abilities. The weekly commitment to the course varies widely, from one half-day or evening a week to two or three sessions per week, depending on whether the course enables different subject options to be taken. In between classes the students are usually asked to complete some homework, usually an essay, although a flexible attitude to the handing in of homework is adopted to allow for the fact that most students lead busy lives and have children to cope with. Whatever the subjects offered, however, the emphasis of the RTS courses tends to be on study skills or the art of studying well and easily. Some courses have special classes or course units available on the subject, while other tutors feel that study skills should be built into each subject's curriculum, particularly English. In class, study skills teaching takes different forms and may include discussions and hand-outs on how to plan and write essays, group readings and analysis of written material, exercises on the construction of sentences and the use of language, lessons on how to take notes and select information and lectures on how to use a library properly.

Within the RTS courses group discussion appears to be the most commonly used teaching method, whatever the content of the course. The idea is to involve students as much as possible in the classroom activities. Some tutors feel that the oral content of the work is very important in releasing inhibitions which so many of the students feel, particularly the women, and also in helping with communication skills. Discussion is also aided by the informal atmosphere which usually exists. During the visits tutors, almost without exception, spoke of their enjoyment of teaching mature students when the atmosphere was relaxed, the students motivated and there were no discipline problems to cope with. Even though the classes were informal in nature they were, of necessity, usually held in traditional classroom surroundings.

Return-To-Study courses are usually taught by a team of lecturers with each teaching his or her own subject. In discussions with teaching staff it emerged that many were themselves returners. Courses were coordinated by a tutor/organiser who also acted as informal counsellor to the students. On most courses the tutorial team held relatively frequent meetings to discuss the course's progress and students' problems. So recent in origin were most bridging courses that the tutors tried to get as much feed-back as possible and on a number of courses students were routinely asked to complete questionnaires.

Concerning the curriculum it was found that general courses which were not divided by subject or where subject choice was minimal tended to be strongly arts and social science biased, with maths and science subjects almost non-existent. This fact has particular implications for the jobs or careers which students might subsequently choose. Much research has focussed on the restricting influence of school practices and society's expectations for girls which cause them, consciously or unconsciously, to choose arts and social science subjects in preference to science. It may be that by providing a broader core curriculum in bridging courses women's aspirations and interests could be widened. The research indicates that in the main this challenge has not been taken up, even where it has been identified. Indeed, there are those who fear that if maths and science were introduced into the standard course curriculum, this would frighten potential women students away. Tutors reported that where subject options were available women still preferred to choose traditional arts and social science subjects. The reasons for the biased curricula may be various. One reason for the bias may be that most general RTS courses, with the exception of those which are all-department ventures such as the Open College and FlexiStudy schemes, tend to be run by a general, liberal, social studies or adult education department. A further reason offered by one head of department was that in colleges which have grown out of technical colleges the science and technical departments are fully stretched in providing practical subjects for youngsters at 'O', 'A', 'ONC' and 'HND' level. By its very nature science teaching involves lengthy laboratory sessions and makes greater demands on facilities and staffing than arts subjects. As a result, heads of these departments may feel that their departments are sufficiently extended without searching for new curricular initiatives. Arts departments in such colleges were originally established to provide back-up education for the science and technical departments, and in some this is still seen as their primary function. They may even be discouraged from running high level courses which might compete for provision with the other departments. Despite this, most arts and social science departmental heads wish to develop their provision and seek to achieve this by promoting adult education and bridging-type courses which do not compete directly with technical subjects. It is likely that where these or other departments initiate bridging courses the resulting curricula will reflect the expertise and interests of the staff who may be reluctant to tap the knowledge and skills of colleagues in different disciplines. The general lack of well-qualified science teachers throughout tertiary as well as secondary education may be a further factor related to this problem and may account for the fact that very few specialised maths and science bridging courses are available to help those wanting to move directly into a first or second career in science. The nationally organised 'Polymaths' and 'Polyphysics' courses running at polytechnics are exceptions to this, although a new set of 'Trimaths' courses teaching a more basic syllabus are starting at a number of colleges. One of the few colleges to make provision for specialised science courses for adults was included in the project as a case study and is described in Chapter Four.

The fees for different RTS courses varied a great deal depending on the number of hours and subjects of which the course was comprised. For a course lasting one year and consisting of one or two part-days per week the level of fees varied from less than £20 to approximately £50 (see Chapter Four). However, there appeared to be considerable sympathy for those who could not afford these levels and exemptions were allowed or reduced rates charged or the fees spread over three terms. Many dependent wives attending bridging courses have very little money of their own, and one or two reported difficulty in persuading their husbands to pay the fees. Students on supplementary benefit were often charged a nominal fee of £1 although there were differences of opinion amongst staff of different colleges whether or not, legally, those on social security should be attending a course.

The issue of end qualifications was one which frequently arose in discussions with providers and students. As stated earlier, some courses equip their students to sit an 'O' or an 'A' level at the end if they so wish, while others are designed to be alternatives to these qualifications and/or their students are assessed continuously. Some of the more introductory courses do not have either an end-of-course exam or certificate, although most provide students with some form of end report. A growing number of colleges have succeeded in getting their RTS courses validated by the CNAA* or some other body and/or have forged links with a local college of higher education, polytechnic or university so that their successful students have an automatic right of entry into higher education. Some examples of such coordination are the links between the Open Colleges and Preston Polytechnic and Lancaster University, Southwark College and the City Polytechnic and Barnet College and the Middlesex Polytechnic. Once a course has gained recognition by one polytechnic or university as providing students with a suitable entry qualification for higher education, it tends to gain wider acceptability.

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*Council for National Academic Awards

There was, however, a certain difference of opinion amongst college staff concerning the question of marketable qualifications. Some tutors expressed the view that their colleges tended to be more supportive of courses which had some form of certification and attributed to them greater status than those which had none. This was not generally found to be the case in adult education centres. Some tutors thought that at the start of the course students claimed not to want to take the associated examinations but that 'this was simply to cover themselves' and that 'once into the course they usually did' with as much if not greater success than younger students. Other tutors mentioned that they thought that assessment by examination was not suitable for mature students because they did not have the necessary 'tunnel vision' to succeed.

3.2.2 Return-To-Work courses

The RTW courses are much less subject-specific than those especially geared to a return to study and tend to focus on imparting general information about work and study opportunities suitable for those who have not yet made a firm job or study choice. However, most do help students with study and communication skills and may require them to write essays and do project work. Some also include lectures on academic subjects and women's studies and all bring in specialist lecturers. These might include careers guidance experts, lecturers on further study or training opportunities, experts on interview techniques and various speakers on work opportunities, particularly social work, the voluntary services and other traditionally female occupations. It appears that relatively few speakers are brought in to talk about non-traditional careers or jobs which involve a more senior level of responsibility.

Breaking new ground in this field are the 'Wider Opportunities for Women' (WOW) courses which are geared to helping women to make informed and realistic occupational plans and to consider, as their title suggests, a wide range of jobs and careers. The courses focus on the needs of women likely to enter unskilled or semi-skilled employment and unlike most other RTW opportunities select their students. The emphasis of the courses is on self-assessment supported by counselling and on providing students with the opportunity of job sampling. In an evaluation of pilot WOW courses, both full- and part-time, Fairbairns (1979) found that the courses did not lead women into non-traditional jobs although they were successful in other aspects such as informing students and preparing them for the next step. The study also revealed that the full-time courses provided a better grounding for women than the part-time opportunities and that students on the full-time courses formed a more cohesive group than otherwise.

However, if other RTW courses are to help women to consider careers in science and technology tutors themselves may need convincing and re-educating in new approaches. When asked how important they felt the issue of non-traditional occupations for women to be some tutors commented along the lines that 'we can't push students into jobs they don't want to do' and 'women want the same old things'. Others were concerned about this issue, however, and were seriously trying to change women's attitudes but reported that 'it was hard to get anywhere against the rock solid prejudice'. It was interesting to find that on one NOW course the tutors were quick to mention alternatives to the students when visiting speakers tended to over-emphasise the traditionally accepted view of a woman's place in society and the world of work.

'New Opportunities for Women' courses are usually of short duration, lasting no more than one day a week for eight to ten weeks. The level of fees asked is low, usually less than £10 per course. Being specifically geared to the needs of women, almost all these courses are timetabled to fall within school hours, i.e. from 9.30 or 10.0 a.m. to 3.00 p.m., and students are able to make use of college crèche provision where it exists. There seems to be a problem in providing college crèches, however, because of the cost of facilities which comply with local authority regulations. Many colleges feel that in the present economic climate they are not able to make such provision.

Crèche provision, together with suitable timetabling appear to be key factors in encouraging women back into education. It seems that women with a family are particularly concerned about child-care problems and if these are not adequately resolved they may feel guilty and therefore unhappy about attending college. Most tutors take a sympathetic attitude if students have to miss classes or leave early because of responsibilities towards their children. Nevertheless this puts such students at a marked disadvantage in terms of their progress. In contrasting the differing attitudes of male and female students one tutor commented, 'men who attend these courses never seem to be preoccupied by domestic problems; such things flow over them in a way that women couldn't allow'.

While the RTS courses tend to be arranged in traditional classroom settings, the tutors of NOW courses try to find some friendly and welcoming room for the class. This is seen by some to be quite important as mature women form one of the more timid student groups on arriving at college. The social aspects of these courses are in fact encouraged by tutors and activities are often arranged to enable students to get to know each other and to form a mutually supportive group. Students can also form a close relationship with tutors who may remain with the group throughout the day's session even when other lecturers are invited to speak. It was observed that at the end of classes tutors were often besieged by students wanting information, advice or simply reassurance and most staff were prepared to give freely of their time. On the debit side it was noted that record keeping and follow-up procedures on NOW courses were generally limited and rarely formalised. Usually the only information which tutors had on how past students had fared arose from the students themselves writing to the college, often because of their need for a reference.

The NOW-type courses also have other problems. Unlike RTS opportunities where a team of tutors is involved, some NOW courses are initiated, organised and taught (except for outside speakers) by one person, usually a woman. If she is ill or leaves the college the course may cease temporarily or permanently. Student numbers on NOW courses are usually kept low to ensure a friendly atmosphere, and as a result some courses had waiting lists. Numbers can become a problem, however, if there are strikes or a spell of bad weather as in the early part of 1979 when tutors reported that take-up of some courses was lower than usual and drop-out rates high. Such an experience may cause tutors not to offer the course at the same time in following years. Tutors have also commented that student numbers on NOW-type courses can vary quite markedly from course to course for no apparent reason. Sustained and thorough advertising of the course is perhaps one way to achieve take-up. Tutors reported, however, that money was not often available for this because of the low priority of the course within the college. The point was made that colleges wanted to improve and upgrade their images and were reluctant to become involved with many non-advanced courses. Also as NOW courses had no end qualifications there was no conventional means for the college to assess whether such courses were 'successful'.

3.3 Issues for Discussion

3.3.1 Location and links

Provision for bridging courses is uneven across the country with the highest concentration in London and the South East of England and a relative dearth in rural areas. The type of bridging course provision varies according to geographical area with all courses in the Inner London area, for example, being of the RTS type and NOW and WOW courses sited in some of the major industrial and commercial centres around the country. It was found that well-established bridging courses tended to exist where continuing education as a whole was flourishing, the bridging course being just one element in a network of provision. In one or two areas the provision was closely linked together as in the Open College Federation of the North West and in the community education projects within Belfast. Tutors in several colleges, polytechnics and universities were found to be coordinating their provision through informal networks so that students could be guided to the course best suited to their needs.

The research has indicated that in some colleges and their immediate environment there is no obvious route for those completing a bridging course to take, while in others a well-thought-out range of opportunities is available. Hatfield Polytechnic is one example of such coordinated provision. A woman returner at Hatfield can progress from the Educational Guidance for Adults unit to a NOW course, continue to a 'Polyprep' course (RTS opportunity), become an Associate Student enabling her to sit in on parts of mainstream courses and eventually take a modular degree. She is able to enter or leave this chain of provision at appropriate points depending on her needs and previous qualifications. Students on other bridging courses may experience difficulty in finding suitable follow-on courses and this is particularly a problem in rural and semi-rural areas.

The catchment area from which colleges drew their students varied considerably and appeared to differ according to the degree of commitment required of students. Where relatively frequent attendance at college was demanded students tended to be drawn from a relatively confined neighbourhood - and this was especially so for married women with children or one-parent families who were dependent on public transport. Some FlexiStudy students, for instance, were only required to attend college approximately once a month and tutors noted that students (women and men) were prepared to journey for over one hour to reach college.

Adult education has been criticised for only attracting those of a relatively favoured socio-economic background and in the case of bridging courses it was found that few were located in the more deprived areas of large cities. Whilst it might be argued that it is among women in precisely such areas that the need for a bridging course is most acute the conclusion that others, apparently more privileged, have no need for such provision appears unwarranted. Whatever their husband's occupation, many of the women attending courses had few or no qualifications whilst others wanted to train for new jobs because of limited opportunities in their past or present occupations.

3.3.2 Mixed and single-sex courses

There was some feeling amongst women tutors of NOW-type courses that, because potential women returners have low levels of confidence, there was a need for an initial bridging course to be peopled by those of similar age and experience, so that they could overcome their fears and regain their confidence in a non-threatening environment before tackling greater challenges. One or two tutors believed that the presence of men jeopardised the achievement of this atmosphere. However, others welcomed the presence of men, taking the view that they brought an alternative and balancing point of view. A tendency was observed in all-women NOW-type classes for the conversation of students to centre upon domestic worries and child-care problems with the women continually trying to manoeuvre the discussions back to domestic issues rather than allowing them to remain on a general level or on the topic chosen by the tutor. This tendency was not so marked in mixed groups. It was observed that in the mixed RTS courses the minority of men in the classes tended to take a greater part in class discussions and it was also noted that male lecturers were more likely to be in charge.

3.3.3 Counselling

The place of the counselling element of bridging courses was one of the first issues to make itself felt to the researchers on the project because of the divergence of opinion expressed about its relevance and hence on the type of provision made. Some tutors believed that counselling was one of their prime tasks and others that it should be an integral part of the curriculum. Others still felt that they had not been trained for it and that 'it should be left to the experts'. Mention has already been made of the informal counselling role fulfilled by many tutors. Some saw this as the most appropriate method of approaching student problems, while others looked for a more formalised approach, either by means of designated times when students could visit them for advice, or through a special counselling unit within the college. Most students, on or soon after enrolment, were asked to complete a short student-profile card or questionnaire which provided details to help tutors in their counselling.

Tutors were generally agreed, however, that women returners have special counselling needs of both a personal and an educational/vocational nature. Some counselling problems which tutors identified were:

(i) Students' lack of confidence in their own ability and fears that they wouldn't succeed either at work or even on further study courses. Women tended to be particularly worried about anything mathematical and about their ability to concentrate and write essays.

(ii) Feelings of guilt that they were not perhaps doing the right thing, with regard to their children, by attending the course. This problem became more acute where the husband was not supportive of the wife in her new venture. Tutors reported that some women tried to over-compensate for feelings of guilt by taking on more chores at home, and many continued to bear much of the burden for home-making while starting a second career. The term 'role-overload' has been used to describe this.

(iii) A tendency to cling to past experiences and familiar ground. When women attending courses were asked what they wanted to do, the answer was often 'social work' or some other 'caring job' for which they felt equipped through bringing up children. Some of the more experienced tutor/counsellors felt that it was important for many women to establish a new base and so regain, in their own minds, lost status and confidence.

(iv) Indecision, especially at the start of the course, as to future study, training and career plans. One tutor provided a quote from a 'typical' student on enrolment: 'I want a job in about a year's time. I don't know what I want. I quite liked English at school. I'm good with children, terrible at maths. Maybe a job with people.' Bridging courses clearly face a considerable challenge in coping with such indecision in the brief period available and it is certainly difficult to judge how successful they are in this matter because positive results may take years to materialise.

(v) Unrealistic career aspirations. Without the knowledge of what a career really entailed in terms of preparation, there were some women who thought that it could be achieved without undue effort. They aspired to occupations which might be either not available locally, have unsuitable hours or required of them more time and effort than family commitments would realistically allow.

(vi) Psychological problems. It has been noted by other researchers and tutors that some students are attracted to bridging courses in an attempt to resolve personal difficulties. Indeed, people recovering from nervous breakdowns and alcoholism were sometimes referred to bridging courses to help them make a fresh start. Some tutors mentioned that their courses attracted a relatively high proportion of women with broken marriages.

3.3.4 Students' learning and study patterns

Some of the learning and study characteristics of mature students and women in particular were identified in the course of the research. In the RTS courses emphasis was placed on study skills, but nonetheless students expressed fears of not being able to cope with such tasks as organising their study time, essay writing and note taking. Concentration could be a problem at the start of a course and some tutors reported that mature students often lacked 'critical ability'. Others had observed that adult students were so motivated that they often attempted too much too soon, and so became disillusioned with themselves. Tutors felt that it was important for classes to have a strong oral content to combat students' poor confidence. In this context one tutor commented that confidence was a necessary prelude to the development of writing skills and was best achieved by 'dialogue and debate'. It was also noted that mature students, especially women, took longer to settle into a course than younger people and time needed to be allowed for this. On the one year courses several tutors felt that this settling-in period lasted for the whole of the first term. Whilst courses for mature students might proceed at a slower pace than others, the motivation of students and their keenness to learn were seen as compensating factors.

Almost all tutors agreed that a formal teaching approach was not appropriate for mature students. Many students on starting RTS courses were pleasantly surprised about the way the courses were run, saying with some relief, 'it's not at all like school', and it was clear that some tutors felt that one of their functions was to overcome prejudices built up by students from previous educational experiences.

Some tutors reported that older students tended to react more favourably to practical or task-related learning situations than to theoretical lectures and found it important to provide plenty of clearly written and informative hand-out material so that students could be left to resolve problems themselves. It was mentioned that because these had not been available at school they were generally treasured by mature students. These and other aspects relating to students' learning and study patterns, which have only been touched upon in this section, will be developed further in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

BRIDGING COURSES - COMMON THREADS AND DIVERSE PRACTICES

4.1 The Courses and their Context

As stated in Chapter Two, twelve separate bridging courses were chosen as case studies. The general characteristics and location of these opportunities are listed below:

(i) a RTS course in an adult college within one of the richer, outer London boroughs. Students take a core curriculum of basic subjects and can choose one additional option to be studied at a different time of the week from the main course. The course runs for 30 weeks and in the third term lectures are provided on job and study opportunities. A special counselling unit is available in the college and RTS students have fixed counselling appointments during the course. Separate courses run twice a day during the week (in the daytime) and a third course has recently started on Saturdays.

(ii) a basic RTS course set in an adult education centre in a socially and racially mixed area of Inner London. The course has, in part, been developed as a bridging opportunity for those graduating from adult literacy provision. Of one-year's duration, the course offers classes in different subjects on three separate evenings per week and in addition one or two classes are held during the day time. Students can take different parts of the programme to meet their individual needs and preferences.

(iii) a further RTS opportunity situated within Inner London which offers students a slightly more advanced and wider curriculum than (ii), spread over two years. Two separate courses are in existence which require students to attend twice per week, either in the daytime or evening.

(iv) part-time and full-time RTS courses in the same college which are specifically geared to helping mature students to increase their ability in science. Both courses are of one year in length and teaching is timetabled between the hours of 10.00 a.m. and 3.00 p.m.

(v) an 'Open College' type of RTS course in the North West of England. Initiated to provide mature students with an alternative to 'A' levels if they wish, the course comprises introductory, 'A' and more advanced 'B' options. Students can enrol twice yearly for different units and so extend their studies to fit in with their commitments. Different subject options are offered on different days of the week and although most are timetabled in the evening, some are now available during the day. To gain a full certificate students must complete introductory units, plus two 'A' and two 'B' units.

(vi) 'Flexi Study' opportunities within one college of further education. Flexi Study courses offer correspondence-course materials with the additional benefit of students being able to attend special tutorials at college and utilise all college facilities. Students can choose any subject for which there is a tutor available in college and extend their studies for as long as they wish.

(vii) a programme of full-time, more academic RTS courses offered by a long-term residential college. Students can take a one-year, general, foundation programme or one of three different two-year courses leading to a CNAA certificate.

(viii) a 'Polymaths' course at a polytechnic in a Northern industrial city. This polytechnic spreads the course over two years although some other polytechnics offer it within one. Polymaths courses are designed to provide mature students with a thorough grounding in mathematics using especially-written materials which include weekly private study programmes and tests. The course is continuously assessed over the two years with an end certificate. Students attend one evening a week and need to set aside one other evening for private study.

(ix) a New Opportunities for Women (NOW) course also situated in a Northern city, which provides women with information on job and study opportunities, in addition to helping them with study and communication skills. Students attend the course on one day a week for ten weeks.

(x) a NOW-type course sited in an adult education annexe of a college within the Home Counties. Again students attend one day a week for ten weeks and the course is repeated every term provided that there are sufficient students. As part of the course students go out on visits to local firms and Higher Education establishments and produce a course magazine.

(xi) a NOW-type course which is designed especially for one-parent families and is situated in the West Country. The course is sited at a location away from the main college and aims to provide adults with the confidence and knowledge to make a second start. Particular attention is paid to the needs of children of one-parent families. Students attend for one morning a week.

(xii) a Pre-school Playgroup Leaders' course. For many thousands of women around the country these courses may act as the first bridging opportunity to a more active life outside the home, although the curriculum is not especially geared to this end. The course runs for one year and part of the course involves practical work in a playgroup. Four courses run per year, each timetabled and starting at different times. Students are expected to attend one half-day per week for 35 weeks.

From these descriptions it can be appreciated that the sample is biased towards RTS opportunities of which a considerable variety exists, including one which incorporates some elements of NOW-type courses. There are two general-curriculum NOW courses and one which is aimed at one-parent families. The Playgroup course is unique in the sample. The balance of the sample should be taken into account when assessing the questionnaire data discussed in this Chapter. It should also be pointed out that the results include returns from 11 out of the 12 programmes in the survey; the college running science courses was unable to furnish any questionnaire data.

4.2 Organisation and Staffing

4.2.1 Staffing

As stated earlier the teaching of RTS courses tends to be organised on a team basis and this was so for all such courses in the sample; in the three NOW-type courses, however, only one or two teachers were involved. In all instances each course had either one or two organisers who coordinated the teaching and acted as informal tutor and counsellor to the students. With very few exceptions the organisers also took some part in the teaching programme. In all but one case the organiser was of Lecturer L2 grade or above and some were of very senior standing depending on the degree of commitment of the college in general to bridging type provision. Usually organisers/lecturers were given special remission from their overall teaching commitments to organise and tutor the courses. Nearly all commented that they did not have as much time to fulfil their organisational role as they would have wished and most appeared to give up some of their own free time to the courses in addition to that allocated. The FlexiStudy organisers also employed special helpers to cope with all the correspondence and extra administration involved in mailing out materials to students and receiving back work assignments.

4.2.2 Facilities

In terms of allocation of rooms almost all courses were located within traditional classroom settings often of quite an austere appearance although, as mentioned earlier, NOW-course tutors attempted to find a welcoming environment for their course. The only course in the sample which was not so sited was that for one-parent families which was situated at a local community centre, mainly on grounds of convenience for the students as the college was located on the outskirts of the town. In many of the RTS courses students had to change rooms for different classes and had no special base; this appeared to be particularly true where students were taking a different mix of subjects. It was apparent that students on bridging courses sited in adult education centres benefited from the fact that the whole college was given over to the needs of adult students. These centres tended to have centrally-located meeting areas which provided a place where people could meet and exchange experiences and the atmosphere was invariably relaxed and informal. One RTS course in an Outer London borough (Course (i) in Section 4.1) was particularly well-endowed with such facilities; the centre of the college immediately opposite the main entrance was arranged as an extensive meeting area and canteen which provided new students with a welcoming aspect when they first entered the door. In other colleges the new adult student was often faced with a large entrance hall, often filled with youngsters, and little indication as to where to go.

There was a clear distinction in the classroom arrangements between NOW and RTS courses. Teaching on the NOW-type courses tended to be conducted with the students sitting in a semicircle round the tutor or speaker rather than at desks in rows facing a blackboard.

4.2.3 Crèche provision

Crèche facilities, which are vital to the full participation of women on bridging courses, were considerably better in the sample than is generally reported within further education. Students on seven out of the twelve courses had the possibility of using a college playgroup or crèche. The need for child-care facilities was not such a pressing problem for the evening courses. Students whose children used playgroups had to contribute something towards these facilities, the average cost of approximately 50p per day, whilst a small amount in itself, would add up to an additional course cost of £5 per ten-week term for each child. In some colleges mothers still had to care for their children during the lunch-hour or could only use the crèche for half a day, thus effectively preventing them from taking part in informal social activities and discussions at lunch time with other students. Several tutors identified such activities as being very important to the personal development of bridging-course students.

4.2.4 Fees

The level of fees asked in the three NOW-type courses in 1979 was the same in all cases. For each course consisting of one day a week for ten weeks, the fee was £5. For RTS opportunities, however, which varied in length and weekly commitment, the fees varied from £12 to £50 for each year of part-time study. At one college in the sample, the same course taught by the same tutors cost students £28 for the day-time course but only £21 for that in the evening.

The Polymaths course fee also included the cost of the course materials, but this worked relatively economically at £17 per year for two years. Open College and FlexiStudy students paid for each subject option individually and again this covered course materials. To complete a full Open College certificate the cost worked out at above £40 although for most students the course extends beyond one year. Each 'average-commitment' FlexiStudy subject cost students £20 in 1979 but, as with almost all bridging courses, this was about to increase. The most expensive part-time course turned out to be the RTS in Science course (Course (iv) in Section 4.1) where fees were £50, although the college concerned was sympathetic to those with financial difficulties. The need for laboratory sessions with back-up technical facilities must clearly influence the cost of such a course. From this it appears that in the more populated areas there is something to be gained from adults 'shopping around' colleges and courses for 'the best buy' for their needs.

The only full-time students in the study were those at the long-term residential college and those taking the full-time RTS in Science course. Students at residential colleges are some of the most fortunate within adult education because they receive mandatory awards from the DES, whether they are residential or not, and this is also true of MSC-sponsored courses. The students on the science course had the problem of competing for the limited number of discretionary awards available. However, some of the residential students claimed to have problems because, as one student stated, 'as a mature residential student, I have to keep my own home and pay the mortgage'. A very high proportion (87% - the highest in the survey) of the students at this college had worked until the course started and felt in the words of one student that 'after being used to a wage, a grant is very small and does not help to meet commitments incurred prior to college days'. When asked whether they had found any difficulty in covering the costs of attending the course, 86 per cent of all bridging-course students answered 'no', although it may have been that some students were unwilling to admit to financial problems. In terms of who paid the course fees or supported them while at college, almost all part-time students answered either, that the money came from their own personal income, including part-time work, or from their husband or partner. Scarcely any reported receiving any special allowance from the college or their local authority and the overall picture is one of students' financial self reliance. This fact is clearly of relevance when the cost of bridging provision is considered.

4.2.5 Timetabling

The sample comprised a mixture of daytime and evening courses and some courses were offered on both an evening and daytime basis. The tutor-in-charge of one of the dual-timetabled courses felt there was a marked difference between the groups of daytime and evening students. 'The daytime students are much more lively and appear fresh at the start of the day; the evening students show less response and are obviously more tired after a day's work.' The same tutor also felt that there was less group feeling amongst evening students because there was no break between classes equivalent to lunch hour in which most 'social mixing' took place. A similar finding was reported in the evaluation of part- and full-time WOW courses (Fairbairns, 1979) when full-time students were found to form a more cohesive group.

All students except those following FlexiStudy courses were asked if they found the course hours convenient, and the greater majority (88%) appeared satisfied with existing arrangements. Six out of the 30 Open College students, however, were less satisfied and wanted 'something during the day whilst the family are away' or a later start in the evening. This latter preference was echoed by several evening students from other colleges.

Of the daytime courses, only the most academic one at a long-term residential college began as early as 9.15 a.m., and in this case the women did not in general have child-care problems. All the rest opted for a 9.30 or 10.00 a.m. start with teaching finishing by 3.00 or 3.30 p.m. in the afternoon, although several students would have liked an even earlier close. Fewer than 10 per cent of students reported having travelling difficulties. Only 5 per cent claimed to have a journey of over one hour's duration, with 67 per cent travelling for less than half-an-hour to college. There were a few examples, however, of outstanding difficulties. One student lived over two hours away by bus and depended on her husband for transport; another undertook an hour-long walk.

When asked in general how easily attending the course fitted in with other commitments 67 per cent of all bridging-course students considered that the course fitted in with their life-styles easily or very easily whilst 29 per cent mentioned some or much difficulty. The main problems cited revolved around children, home and school holidays, although difficulties varied amongst the different types of students. 'My son's school holidays and the college holidays did not coincide' was a typical comment from a daytime student, while a residential student related the problem of 'doing cleaning of college room and personal laundry, then going home at weekends to do the same'. A

FlexiStudy student found that working at home was difficult with the children around. Several students mentioned problems related to coping with a bridging course, part-time work and/or household duties. These were forcibly expressed by one woman; 'I have three young sons - I work thirty hours night duty - a husband and home to cope with - no help - not easy.'

As the vast majority of programmes included in the study were part-time courses it was not possible to judge whether women returners gained more from either part- or full-time provision although, after comparing full- and part-time WOW courses, it was concluded that the full-time courses provided women with a better vocational grounding and were easier to organise. The results of Section 4.3 in this report, however, suggest that full-time courses, as run at the residential college, attract students of a somewhat different background from the others.

4.2.6 Advertisement and student numbers

It was suggested in Chapter Three that good and appropriate advertisement may be one of the major keys to ensuring adequate and constant student numbers on bridging courses. The survey showed that the sample students learned of the course by a variety of means with no one way standing out, as shown by Table 4.1.

Although tutors tended to think that their special course leaflets (all courses had at least one) and the recommendations of students' friends had the largest effects on student enrolments, the highest proportion of students learnt of the course through either the local paper or the college prospectus. It is interesting to note that one of the recommendations of the WOW-course evaluation was for increased advertisement through the local press (Fairbairns, 1979). The 'Other' category of Table 4.1 included referrals by various members of the social services and other college tutors, and students writing 'on spec' to the college for a suitable course or information. Tutors were asked whether they made any special efforts by way of press advertisement or talks to local groups to attract students. On nine courses press advertisements were placed and in seven instances tutors reported having addressed local groups.

Table 4.1 Methods by which students learned of the course

METHOD		PERCENTAGE OF ALL RESPONSES*
(i)	Advert or Article in Local Paper	22.0
(ii)	College prospectus	21.1
(iii)	Special Course Leaflet	17.5
(iv)	Friends	15.7
(v)	Poster	4.5
(vi)	Local Radio Programme	1.0
(vii)	Other	18.4

*there were 223 different responses

Course leaflets in the main appeared attractive with clearly laid out information and several incorporated an application form. Some were professionally printed; others were duplicated by simpler reprographic methods available within colleges and one or two tutors mentioned the scarcity of finance for advertisement and other back-up services. The Open College courses, however, were particularly well endowed, with the Open College Federation as a whole receiving £1,500 from Lancashire County Council to cover advertising. Their publicity included special stands located in public places which held course leaflets providing information on all Open College opportunities in the North West. The organisers of the FlexiStudy courses felt that their successful advertising had been the main reason for student numbers more than doubling from 1977/78 to 1978/79 (from 100 to 250). All FlexiStudy options are now advertised in one leaflet with a second small booklet entitled 'How to Get the Best from FlexiStudy' providing information on college facilities and advice on study skills. The college offering FlexiStudy also has a prominent inset in the local press each August which is considered to bring in a large number of students. The long-established residential college, which every year has to turn away students, describes its programme in a glossy prospectus. The adult centre in an Outer London borough also conducts a vigorous advertising campaign with plenty of leaflets, posters and a college newsheet setting out all its bridging-type provision in an attractive manner. The Preschool Playgroup courses generally have little need of extensive publicity because of the constant supply of mothers wishing to take part in their children's pre-school education and acquire an interest outside the home environment.

Despite extensive advertising courses could still experience difficulty in attracting adequate student numbers. The Open College course for instance had problems in finding sufficient students to fill all potential subject options. Amongst the sample there was also one RTS and NOW-type programme in particular difficulty. The RTS programme concerned was the one which provided mature students with an entry into science careers via either a part-time or a full-time course. Both courses had suffered in the latter part of 1979 because of the college switchboard at the appropriate annexe being closed down over the summer. Course leaflets had given students a phone number at this annexe to ring for further information, and because prospective students had been unable to contact a tutor, only a small number of enrolments had been received. The part-time course which previously had a student roll of twelve did not start in the Autumn of 1979, while the newer full-time course had only just found sufficient students to enable it to take place.

The NOW-type course also in trouble was one which, like the RTS course mentioned above, was aimed at a specific group, in this case one-parent families. The daytime course starting in the Autumn of 1979 had only five women students (the college provides a daytime course with one in the evenings in alternate sessions). The tutor concerned felt that the course had not received the special and subtle advertising which it needed. Previously she had talked to groups and appeared on both local radio and television and student numbers of 15 or more had resulted. Because the college administration was concerned about the sensitivity of the course subject the tutor was now being discouraged from such activities and had found difficulty in designing suitably subtle press advertisements instead. Promised referrals from the local Gingerbread group and social workers had not materialised.

It was generally thought that on NOW-type courses numbers should not be large - tutors proposed no more than 15, 20 or 25 students - so that students did not feel overwhelmed and a good group feeling could develop. Two of the three NOW courses in the sample seemed to be healthy in terms of numbers, one having slightly fewer than 20, the other over 25 students. These types of opportunity and also the playgroup leaders' courses are characterised by low drop-out rates with students generally leaving only because of child-care problems, house-moving or finding a job.

One or two of the RTS courses put restrictions on class sizes so that students of different abilities could receive sufficient individual attention. In the main such classes tended to have numbers ranging from 10 to 25. Drop-out rates on RTS courses were much higher than the NOW courses with the exception of the residential course. The lowest drop-out rate estimated by a tutor for such a course was 25 per cent and some tutors, particularly those involved with two-year courses, reported a drop-out as high as 50 per cent or more, the worst time being between years one and two. The average rate for the one-year, RTS opportunities appeared to be between 30 and 33 per cent with the crucial period being the first term. The FlexiStudy tutors were encouraged to find that their drop-out rate of 30 per cent compared very favourably with that of other correspondence courses where it was thought to be as high as 60 to 70 per cent. They felt that the tutorials and the degree of contact with the college,albeit small, accounted for the difference.

4.3 The Students

4.3.1 Students' characteristics

Views tend to vary somewhat amongst those involved with bridging courses as to the 'type' of woman attracted to these courses. Several tutors have been able, as a result of their own questionnaires, to draw up a profile of students on their particular course. Of the women taking part in the eleven different bridging courses in which students completed questionnaires 66 per cent were married, 18 per cent were single and 16 per cent either separated, widowed or divorced. This pattern held for most individual courses with the exception of those attending the residential college in which the majority (54%) were single and 26 per cent were separated, widowed or divorced. Table 4.2 reveals that the majority of students in the sample were in their thirties with a fair number in their late twenties and early forties.

A few women were attending a bridging course in preparation for or during retirement.

Table 4.2 Age grouping of students

	AGE GROUP							
	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-49	50-59	60+	NON-RESPONSE
%	4.6	13.1	30.3	24.0	17.1	6.3	2.3	2.3

N = 174

Seventy eight per cent of students had children and of these 70 per cent had one or two offspring and 30 per cent, three or four. A considerable percentage (46%) were attending the courses while their children were of primary school age, but almost 25 per cent had children who were younger, as shown by Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Age of youngest child living with the students

	AGE GROUP OF CHILD					
	2	2-4	5-11	12-16	16	NON-RESPONSE
%	3.7	21.6	46.4	10.4	13.4	4.5

135 students had one or more children

It is always a difficult, even a dubious, process to categorise people by some socio-economic rating, especially if that rating concerns the spouse rather than the persons themselves. As it was anticipated that most women would not be working while attending the course and possibly would not have been doing so for several years previously, the students were asked to specify their spouse's occupation as a guide to their life-style. Naturally a fair proportion were reluctant to do this and only 98 responses were received. In many instances the information was given in insufficient detail to enable adequate classification. It was apparent, however, that very few students had husbands with unskilled jobs.

Students were asked to state whether or not they felt that their family was encouraging them in their new venture. The results from this question are shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Attitudes of the family to the students attending the course.

TYPE OF COMMENT	PERCENTAGE OF ALL COMMENTS*
Encouragement from Family	70.3
Neutral Reaction from Family	13.2
Discouragement from Family	11.9
Other comments	4.6

*there were 151 comments in total

Contrary to some opinion the vast majority of women do receive encouragement from their husbands, children and other relatives. A selection of the comments is provided below:

(comments are unedited)

(i) 'My husband is sympathetic and willing to talk about my work and often tells me to go and do my homework! My 13 year old daughter is experiencing the same difficulties I had at School. This is a reminder how valuable the course is, and helps me to understand why we have these difficulties.'

(ii) 'My children are helping me by encouragement and understanding, knowing that it means we have to go without things for a while longer and helping me with homework and housework.'

(iii) 'they all think I'm mad but they encourage me. Kids love it that I do homework too.'

However some of the comments on the negative side were rather heart-rending:

(i) 'my husband says my attending the course is a total waste of time and will not discuss it at all. I believe he fears that further education may change me, i.e. in my attitudes to him and my home.'

(ii) 'I have received little encouragement from a family who feel secretarial work to be the ultimate in female employment.'

(iii) 'although my husband approves of my attending the course, he does not expect it to interfere with domestic or social commitments, especially his!'

4.3.2 Educational background

Table 4.5 Age at which students left school

	13	14	15	16	16+	NON-RESPONSE
%	0.6	6.9	30.5	33.3	26.4	2.3

N = 174

Table 4.5 shows that most women students left school at either 15 or 16 years of age with only a quarter continuing their studies in the sixth form. When asked whether they had ever attended a college or university full-time almost 71 per cent answered 'no' and 63 per cent said that they had never received any training (in a non-college setting). However, when students were requested to indicate whether they had ever attended part-time courses other than the present, a high percentage (77%) answered in the affirmative suggesting that most were not entirely new to further or adult education colleges. The survey revealed that 74 per cent of students already possessed some kind of qualification, indicating that the majority of women students have had some previous post-school education although not necessarily at an advanced level. The level of qualifications was usually limited to one or two 'O' levels, RSA certificate or other secretarial or artistic diplomas.

4.3.3 Occupational background

Almost 40 per cent of the students were involved with a part- or even a full-time job (e.g. nursing or shift work) at the time of the course. This suggests that a proportion of the students were attending the course with a view to a job change. Sixty six per cent of students had been in paid work at some time in their past although there was quite a number of non or other responses to this question. The only courses where large numbers of students had given up a job in order to attend a bridging course were those at the long-term residential college.

Table 4.6 shows the distribution of the number of years since students were last in paid work. Clearly the women do not conform to a set pattern with respect to this:

Table 4.6 Years since students were in paid work

	1	1-3	4-9	10-15	NEVER WORKED	NON OR OTHER RESPONSE	NOT APPLICABLE
%	16.7	10.3	16.1	14.4	0.0	4.6	37.9

N = 174

An attempt was made to find out the level of activity of students outside the home environment. Twenty per cent were currently engaged in voluntary work at the time of the course, for instance, although 48 per cent of the remainder had done some such work in the past. With respect to any other activities such as participating in drama groups or some other organised social activity, 56 per cent claimed that they were currently involved and 76 per cent of the others that they had been in the past. These results indicate, therefore, that the concept of a wife closseted at home with the children and the housework is not a realistic stereotype for most bridging-course students.

4.3.4 Reasons for attending the course

The open-ended question which provoked the highest response on the questionnaire with some 247 different comments was that which asked students to say why they were attending the course. The reasons given were coded under a number of headings and these are shown in Table 4.7. The results revealed that the women had a variety of reasons for attending the courses. While 37 per cent were using the course as a bridge to something else, a much larger proportion were there to assess themselves in some way in relation to study and future possibilities without having definite plans at its outset. In other words many women on first starting a bridging course were at some stage prior to seeking a specific occupational outcome, as shown by a selection of their comments:

Table 4.7 Reasons given by students for attending the course

REASON	PERCENTAGE OF ALL RESPONSES*
Improve General Education	20.6
Bridge to New or First Job or Career	15.8
Bridge to Outside World	11.3
Advice and Information	11.0
Personal Development	10.6
Bridge to Further or Higher Education	9.7
Improve Study Ability	8.9
Assessment of Self and Future Possibilities	8.1
Other	4.0

*there were 247 different responses

(comments are unedited)

(i) 'Needed to regain confidence in own ability due to stagnation at home. Course good way of achieving entrance to College or social work courses. I feel I need to do something constructive with my life besides being wife and mother.' (Open College student)

(ii) 'to find out whether I could study in terms of ability and organisation of my life-home-children. Also to dip into subjects not attempted before.' (RTS student)

(iii) 'I decided it appeared to be a very interesting course without actually having to commit oneself to a definite decision at the end.' (NOW student)

(iv) 'to take a year off from domestic duties and to do something I wanted to - a sort of holiday.' (Residential student)

(v) 'to study in a disciplined and purposeful way, and also to study a variety of subjects all as part of one course, not in various Evening Institutes.' (RTS student)

(vi) 'to help clarify various ideas. To be shown new openings, new ideas.' (NOW student)

(vii) 'I wanted to go back to work but not to a boring office job. Also I wanted to get used to using my brain again and meeting people.' (Open College student)

4.4 Approaches to the Curriculum

4.4.1 Return-To-Study course programmes

Having in most cases been devised to help to meet locally-identified needs, the structure and content of courses varied considerably. To illustrate how this was so three examples of general RTS courses are given:

(i) Two-year RTS course in Inner London

First year: 3 terms each of the 'Use of English' and 'A New Approach to Maths'
2 terms each of History, Environmental Sciences and Literature.

Second year: programme of options chosen from Art, Environmental Studies, History, Literature, Mathematics and Sociology, which is suited to individual needs.

Students attend college between 11.00 a.m. and 3.15 p.m. for the day-time courses or in the evenings. The course incorporates a residential weekend each year.

(ii) One-year RTS course in Inner London

The course runs three evenings a week and some daytime classes are available. Students can opt to take different parts of the curriculum according to their academic needs. Throughout the year the weekly programme comprises:

1 hour	Social Studies
2 hours	Maths
2 hours	English for Immigrants
1 hour	English for students progressing from Adult Literacy classes
2 hours	Bridging English at below 'O' level standard
2 hours	English plus Study Skills at approximately 'O' level standard

New daytime classes now offer in addition to Basic English, 'Behind the Image: Advertising' (1 hour) and 'What's an 'ology: an Introduction to Education' (2 hours).

(iii) One-year RTS course in Outer London

First term: Psychology, English, Study Techniques and Counselling

Second term: Economics, Sociology, English and Individual Counselling

Third term: Job-opportunities lectures, some Maths and other subjects developed further

In addition students choose one specialised subject option which can include Science.

Of the other RTS courses in the sample, both the FlexiStudy and Open College courses offered a variety of subject options including study skills which students were encouraged to take before or alongside other subjects. In the Open College scheme the number on offer was determined by student numbers but FlexiStudy students could choose any subject for which there was a suitable tutor within the college and materials available from the National Extension College. The range of options has recently been expanded by the introduction of more vocationally-oriented materials from the National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO) and other sources. Both the Open College and the Polymaths courses have specially-written materials, the Open

College materials being produced by tutors and outside advisers and then processed by the Open College Federation. The Polymaths materials are written at national level. Students on both the Polymaths and FlexiStudy courses continually either hand in or send back work for marking after one or two chapters of the course book have been completed. Polymaths students also have computer-marked tests after every few chapters. For FlexiStudy students an average-length course might involve ten marked assignments and the possibility of ten tutorials although students do not necessarily attend all tutorials available.

The curricula offered by the long-term residential college provided the most academic RTS opportunity within the sample and could be specialised or general depending on the wishes of the student. Students could either take a 'Foundation' course without an end qualification, made up of a choice of up to four of the subjects on offer at the college, or follow either the arts, social science or social studies (a vocational option for intending social workers) options over two years leading to a CNAA certificate. Some maths and statistics are introduced into the curriculum by way of the 'Methods of Social Investigation' classes.

The science courses for mature students had a strong bias towards chemistry and biology although it was claimed that an emphasis was given in the chemistry course to physical chemistry in order to introduce students to the concepts of physics. Maths was also included as a necessary back-up subject, as were study skills, the stress being on those skills relating to scientific study. Time was also allotted for a certain amount of counselling. The curriculum of the part-time course was aimed at a lower level than that designed for full-time students.

The Polymaths curriculum, however, as it appears in the course book is a mixture of traditional and modern maths with a bias towards traditional concepts. Tutors mentioned that they were not always happy with the explanations given for some concepts and in these cases substituted their own.

The emphasis on almost all RTS bridging courses was on continuous assessment of the students, with the exception of the residential course. The only other courses to employ end exams were FlexiStudy, Open College 'B' options and the full-time science course, although several others expected students to do some kind of project to indicate their ability for sustained study. Five of the twelve bridging courses provided end-of-course certificates and all these were courses of a more intensive nature, i.e. the residential, Open College, FlexiStudy, Pre-school Playgroup Leaders' and the Polymaths courses. All RTS courses expected students to do a certain amount of private study including assignments which were assessed. The importance placed upon this seemed to be directly proportional to the level of the course itself.

4.4.2 NOW-type course programmes

In contrast with the RTS opportunities the two NOW-type programmes aimed at a general audience differed rather in structure than content and, again, the best way of illustrating this is by outlining each programme:

(i) First NOW-type course

The course runs from 9.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. for ten weeks. Each morning is split up into two sessions, separated by a coffee break. The course tutor usually takes one of the sessions herself dealing with the following topics:

Women and Work: Changing Social Attitudes
Jobs: New Ideas and Where to Look
Self Assessment
Trends in Education
Practical sessions on interviews and application forms
How to Study
Local Opportunities for Further Education
Practical Problems in Focus
Questionnaire to students
Course magazine (Project work for students)

The other session comprised talks by outside speakers and included:

Voluntary Work
Occupational Guidance
Social Work
The Open University
Running your own Business

In addition students went out for a visit to their local College of Higher Education and to a large local company to see up-to-date secretarial practices.

(ii) Second NOW-type course

This was timetabled from 10.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. for ten weeks and was run by two tutors. Each day had a similar structure.

First Session - students divide into two groups for practice in and discussions on Study and Communication Skills and also write essays for marking

Coffee

Second Session - talk by an outside speaker from the social or voluntary services, or business and educational organisations.

Lunch

Afternoon - students either divide again into groups for discussion or some other speaker (often from the college itself) is brought in.

The formal part of the course ends at 2.30 p.m. but tutors stay on for a further half-an-hour to discuss problems with students.

The NOW-type programme for one-parent families was somewhat different. The main item on each of the twelve mornings' agenda was a talk or discussion by an outside expert with a little time left for discussion with the tutor before and afterwards. The topics covered were:

'The Law' (two lectures)
a film entitled 'The Life that's Left'
'Effects of Loss in Children' (two lectures)
'State Benefits'
'Income Tax'
a second film leading to a discussion
'Some Aspects of General Health'
'Working Parents and Leisure'
'Returning to Work'

The Pre-school Playgroup Leaders' course did not fit into either of the two broad categories of bridging provision so far described. Students attended lectures on the development of young children and how to cope with them, and in the second term were sent out for work experience in local playgroups. These visits were then written up. In addition a certain amount of practical homework relating to the making of playgroup materials was carried out. One of the attractions of such a course for many women is that it builds upon their most recent experience and knowledge, that of bringing up young children.

4.4.3 Teaching strategies

Throughout the sample the most common form of teaching employed was informal lecturing in which the teacher expected and encouraged students to ask questions and air their points of view. The atmosphere in the classes tended to be lively, particularly in the study skills sessions where a special emphasis was placed on student participation and debate. However, students soon showed their impatience if they considered the subject matter irrelevant or unappealing. As classes were composed of mixed abilities and interests it was unavoidable that there would be one or two students to whom the content was not always appropriate. Lectures on job and study opportunities, for instance, could never fully accommodate all students' requirements.

Maths and science lessons were characterised by numerous questions from students and requests for further explanations. The students (all women) on one of the special Return-To-Study in science courses were obviously finding it interesting and challenging and mentioned that they couldn't understand why more women did not want to take such courses. Whatever the curriculum, tutors reported how much they enjoyed teaching the bridging courses and also how drained they often felt afterwards because of the degree of interaction between themselves and the students.

The lectures, whether academic or of general interest, varied in length from about three quarters to one and a half hours in length. The longer classes were usually broken up by different activities; in the Polymaths classes, for instance, a lecturer explained the theory for the first hour and then the class divided into a number of small groups to work out examples. Other tutors were brought in to take the various groups and to discuss problems. This same format was used as described previously by one of the NOW courses. Some of the classes had such small numbers, however, that they remained from the outset a tightly-knit group in which individuals received a great deal of attention.

Much use was made of hand-out materials for the RTS classes for whole-class activities, especially in English and study skills. The hand-outs often contained thought-provoking pieces of prose for analysis and discussion. Some included exercises for the students to complete in class or at home. One of the tutors using this approach thought that hand-outs and work-sheets had an important place in the education of adults because some always found it difficult to attend each week and these sheets helped to maintain continuity. Also, by getting the class involved in doing a set exercise at some point, tutors were able to talk to individuals with problems. It was noted that tutors made relatively little use of blackboards and overhead projectors, except in maths and science, preferring to maintain the discussions and keep eye-to-eye contact with students.

Several tutors mentioned in interview about the care needed in marking homework and criticising students. Both had to be done very subtly to avoid students losing their confidence and leaving. It was noticed during observations that very little open criticism was voiced in class, tutors always stressed when reading out portions of essays that everybody else's which hadn't been chosen was equally worthwhile. Criticisms, where made, were couched in a light-hearted manner and one tutor always marked students' essays in pencil rather than in red ink as the pencil appeared less objectionable. Another stated that they tried to give homework back individually to avoid embarrassment. Many students seemed particularly concerned about their homework and wanted a quiet word and some encouraging remarks from their tutor about it. Interest often appeared to increase in the classes when next week's homework was being discussed or last week's given back.

On several courses provision was made for students to see tutors outside class hours. The tutorial aspect was one of the most important elements of the FlexiStudy opportunities and, from visiting these tutorials, it appeared that they were friendly and informal with tutors discussing personal and organisational problems as much as the course work and providing alternative explanations to the set materials when students were having problems. The college, backed by the Council for Educational Technology, had recently introduced 'Tele-conferences', a means by which a number of students and their tutor could be linked together by phone. It was felt by some tutors, however, that the scheme had been slow to get off the ground because of the apprehension of both staff and students. Another new addition to their tutorial provision was tutors' 'surgeries' - designated times when students could see or phone their tutor for advice to complement existing tutorials. Yet a further innovation at the college was the use of the college's audio-visual centre by FlexiStudy students. It was hoped that an increasing amount of subject matter could be recorded on tape so that these students had a further learning strategy available to them.

The residential college also had a formalised tutorial system; this was run on traditional university lines in that students wrote one essay a week on a different subject and then had a one-to-one tutorial with a member of staff. Quite a few of the students were obviously finding this system difficult and mentioned the essays as the most problematic part of the course. One student, however, commented; 'the greatest part of each week is spent writing an essay - this often seems too much but on reflection at the end of the first year I realise what a valuable exercise writing an essay is'. Both the science and Open College courses also utilised tutorials to a certain extent as a back-up to their main teaching provision and all the others were prepared to see students individually if the need arose.

The start and the close of bridging courses have already been noted as being critical times. At the start students are apprehensive and lacking in confidence; at the close, after making new friends, they are often loathe to go, and some are again fearful as to what lies ahead. Three of the RTS courses ran an 'induction' session of some kind for both administrative and social reasons, and all the others usually attempted to have a counselling interview with students on or before enrolment. The other courses took a less formal approach by simply introducing the course programme on the first day of the course.

Several tutors on the first day personally took students around the college to show them the library and other facilities. All tutors on the NOW-type courses stayed with the students throughout the course. Almost all bridging courses ended with some kind of party or social session to which past students were often invited.

4.5 Students and the Curriculum

A considerable portion of the questionnaire was concerned with eliciting students' views of the course. The vast majority (74%) had in fact thoroughly enjoyed their studies although this obviously varied from college to college. About two thirds considered that the course had helped them to get out of a rut at home. When asked what they found to be most valuable students offered a variety of comments.

A large proportion of students' comments on the questionnaire identified the achievement of good study techniques as being one of the most difficult aspects of the courses. Particular mention was made of the problems arising in essays and written work, which were mentioned in nearly a quarter of the comments, and of the lack of time for individual study (20%). However, 70 per cent of the students considered that the courses had been successful in helping them with these problems and an even larger proportion (78%) felt that they had helped them to get back into the way of studying in general.

Contact with people was also perceived to be a great benefit derived from the courses and many students spoke of the value of contact with others of similar background and experience and of discussing issues of common interest. Seventy four per cent of the students claimed that the course had helped them to make friends and a similar proportion that it had helped them with their confidence. 'The group discussions and tutors' attitudes - both help to rebuild confidence' reported one student and 'the talk-ins which allow you to build up confidence to join in and speak for yourself without feeling inferior' were mentioned by another. A sizeable proportion (30%), however, felt that too little time was given to discussion in the curriculum.

Most of the courses, whether informally or formally, sought to raise students' awareness of further job and study opportunities. When asked, however, whether the course had provided enough information in these areas just over 50 per cent considered this to be the case and a number of students commented in their open-ended responses that more time should be spent on this activity. It appears that there was a need among these for more detailed and relevant information; one student asked for a 'breakdown of actual jobs as opposed to professions' and another suggested 'more advice on the depth of knowledge' required for studying subjects at a higher level.

Heading the list of elements in the course which students thought merited greater emphasis in terms of time are specific subjects. Ten per cent of the comments were concerned with maths and/or science and these came from students already taking these subjects as well as from those who did not. As noted earlier, the students in the sample tended to receive a certain amount of maths but rarely any science. Many felt that the maths taught to them at school had been, in the words of one student, 'not a pleasant experience' and wanted more time given to it and more opportunities to practise the concepts learnt. Given that the curricula offered by the sample colleges were very often biased towards arts and social studies, it is interesting to note that as many as 62 per cent of students recorded that the course had broadened their job/career ambitions. When asked, however, if the course had actually changed their job/career intentions in any way 68 per cent said that it had not. Of these 47 per cent said this was because they had already decided upon a career prior to the course and 28 per cent that the course had not provided any new ideas.

Clearly with such a diverse range of interests and abilities it is difficult for course tutors to provide courses which meet the needs of all students. Not surprisingly a considerable number (16%) identified specific subjects among those on offer not to be to their liking, and a similar proportion (14%) had misgivings about emphases in the overall curriculum or teaching methods adopted (12%). A selection of fairly typical adverse comments on the courses includes:

(i) 'Having a lecture and then not having an explanation on what we are supposed to do or the benefit its for' (RTS student)

(ii) 'working alone - the lack of discussing projects with other students' (FlexiStudy student)

(iii) 'Vague talk not really applicable to married women with commitments' (NOW course student)

(iv) 'Misdirected discussion groups' (RTS student)

(v) 'over-emphasis on the deprived status of women by society' (NOW course student)

(vi) 'some discussions which led to chat about home, children etc. (of which I am guilty too)' (NOW course student)

Over one quarter of the students' comments, however, were to the effect that there was nothing without value in the courses.

4.6 Counselling and Decision Making

The counselling provision amongst the sample courses varied considerably. Tutors on five of the RTS courses had some special remission specifically relating to their counselling role with students and, of these, tutors on three courses had received some special training. None of the NOW-type course tutors had undergone formal counselling training. On only two of the courses (the science and RTS course in Outer London) was individual counselling actually built into the curriculum, although the FlexiStudy tutorials could be viewed as counselling sessions and the course for one-parent families was almost wholly a counselling exercise. Only one course had a counselling and advisory clinic especially for adults although one or two other colleges had a counsellor.

The most common practice appeared to be an informal arrangement whereby students with particular problems arranged to see the tutor just before or just after classes. The two general-curriculum NOW-type courses both utilised group counselling in some way and made use of self-assessment questionnaires with the whole class. The adult education centres were better equipped, both in terms of staff training for counselling and an understanding of the counselling needs of adults, than other further education establishments. All but three of the course tutors attempted to provide prospective students with a counselling interview on or before enrolment; this was compulsory on two courses.

On nine of the courses students had to fill in an enrolment form providing basic details of their backgrounds, and in three or four instances this information was circulated around the tutorial team to keep them informed of potential problems, and was updated from time to time to record students' marks. On some of the more informal courses a lower emphasis was placed on this activity.

Only 24 per cent of the sample reported having received counselling: the great majority of these felt that it had been helpful. However, students may have had difficulty in understanding the term 'counselling' used on the questionnaire. It is interesting to note, however, from other questions that fewer than half (42%) of the students felt that the course had helped them either with their decision-making in general or in making realistic study and career choices (48%). Fifty two per cent felt that the course had helped them in reorganising their lives. All three of these issues could be considered to be counselling areas. Some students specified a need for more counselling in their open-ended comments; one on a NOW-type course recorded that she would like to see more time given to finding out what problems a middle-aged person is likely to encounter if she decides to try to find employment, while another requested 'more concentration on the special problems of working mothers' and a third that 'it would be helpful... to have individual counselling on what course of action would be most advisable in relation to the talents possessed and the opportunities available'.

Asking students about their intentions after the course ended provided a further means of assessing whether the course had helped them in making decisions or in widening their aspirations. Contrary to some opinion women recorded no marked preference for part- as opposed to full-time work. Relatively few, however, were seeking to start or continue in employment when the courses ended. Table 4.8 shows that approximately half of the sample wanted to start a further study or

Table 4.8 Intentions of bridging-course students after the course ends

INTENTION	PERCENTAGE OF ALL RESPONSES*
Start a Further Study Course	36.5
Start a Training Course	14.3
Remain at Home for Present	12.5
Not Sure	11.3
Remain in Same Job	10.4
Obtain a Job	5.4
Change Jobs	4.6
Stay at Home, Don't Want a Job	0.0
Other	5.0

*there were 240 different responses as students could indicate more than one preference or training course. One or two tutors considered that this was because the women 'could then put off decisions yet further' but, alternatively, it could indicate that students were not yet at the stage of making a firm career choice but were still 'shopping around'. Approximately 34 per cent, however, were either unsure or were going to remain at home or in the same job as previously.

Table 4.9 shows the type of study or training courses to which students hoped to progress.

Table 4.9 Further study and training courses mentioned by students

TYPE OF COURSE	PERCENTAGE OF ALL RESPONSES*
Further Education Courses	35.4
Degrees and Higher Education	28.3
Teacher Training	8.0
Social Work Training	7.1
Other Training	5.3
No Definite Course	15.9

*there were 113 responses

The results reveal that a substantial number were hoping to progress to other further or higher education courses with 15 per cent wishing to enter traditionally-female training in teaching or social work. When asked why they wished to attend these further courses, approximatel 30 per cent said 'because it will help in my intended job or career', and 25 per cent that 'it will help my general job/career prospects'. Twenty five per cent also gave 'for interest only' as a reason.

The results of Table 4.10 display how traditional the women are in their intended job choices, with only five indicating a non-traditional career preference in technology and seven for management or administration.

Table 4.10 Future jobs or careers mentioned by students

JOB/CAREER	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
Social Work	16
Teaching	12
Nursing	7
Management/Administration	7
Secretarial	4
Playgroup Leader	4
Therapist	3
Computing	3
Technician	2
Other	3

These results do indicate that the courses as a whole had done little to widen women's career aspirations and the extent of their influence on women's decisions must be questioned. As stated before, it may be unreasonable to expect such an influence to be great in view of the course's short duration.

Of the courses in the sample several were linked with establishments of higher education; in three colleges such links were more formalised while tutors of others felt that the reputation of their course was sufficient to ensure students an entry into higher education. At one college which offered teacher training as well as adult education, students could progress easily to a popular next step. Most of the students on the Pre-school Playgroup Leaders' course were wishing to go on to further studies relating to children or to work in playgroups, although a few were looking elsewhere. Few students on this course were content to go back to being simply housewives. One of the NOW courses was set in an institution which was large enough to be able to offer several further study possibilities itself, such as a Certificate course in English which was said to be popular with the students.

However, it was not easy for some tutors to be able to point out all the possible pathways for their students as the courses themselves had only been in operation for a limited time. In fact between eight and nine had been running for three years or less, an indication of how recent the development of bridging course provision has been.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE WIDER CONTEXT

5.1 Introduction

A literature review can be of use in several different ways; it can simply provide a source of information, it can help broaden the perspectives of those concerned with one aspect of a larger subject, or it can be of even greater consequence in furnishing new ideas and guidelines for developing future initiatives. In order to be of real use for developmental purposes, however, a review needs to be conducted before ideas have become fully formulated and practices intransient and difficult to change. Today opportunities for women returners remain in a state of flux so that any ideas which can be acquired as a result of reviewing the comparable provision overseas may be of practical relevance to future British developments.

In conducting such a survey three factors need to be kept in mind. Firstly, educational systems, even among the developed countries of Europe and North America, have been moulded by a differing set of traditions and experiences. Are the resulting opportunities for women compatible, relevant or even adaptable to the British system? In addition there is the problem of varying terminology which may mask the true nature of the provision. This problem has already been mentioned in relation to the range of titles allotted to similar bridging courses in the United Kingdom. How much greater is it likely to be when dealing with translated material which includes terms which are inadequately explained for the reader who is not cognizant with the system being described? Lastly, a review cannot hope to cover all possible information relating to any subject, even if that information is easily accessible, which was not the case for some European opportunities because of the fragmented nature of the provision. This review, therefore, has attempted to highlight the more distinctive features of the educational and vocational programmes for adult women within the developed countries of Western Europe and North America.

5.2 National Initiatives

Alongside the United Kingdom most other developed countries have moved at varying speeds through the 1960s and 1970s towards reducing inequalitv of opportunity between men and women. Many have sought to achieve this via legislation, often commencing with broadly-based equal pay and then sex discrimination acts followed by further measures to deal with specific aspects of educational and vocational inequality and to close loop-holes in earlier legislation once its efficiency and viability have been assessed. An example of how such legislation has developed over the years is provided by the United States where the following legislative sequence took place:

1962	Manpower Development and Training Act (MDTA)
1963	Equal Pay Act, extended in 1972.
1964	Civil Rights Act of which Title VII provided women with increased equality of employment.
1972	Equal Employment Opportunity Act extended Title VII even further with the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission acting as the federal enforcement agency for the act.
1972	Educational Amendments Act, Title IX prohibited all inequality in employment and education.
1972	Equal Rights Amendment to United States Constitution (ERA). This is still awaiting ratification by enough States for it to become part of the constitution.
1973	Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA).
1976	Vocational Education Act on sex stereotyping and bias in vocational education which sought to ensure equality of access for men and women into non-traditional occupations.

From the above it can be seen that equal opportunities legislation in America is well advanced compared with that in the United Kingdom and much of Western Europe where initial equal pay and sex discrimination acts have only recently been passed or are still at the discussion stage. This is also true for the actual provision made for women in terms of special educational/vocational programmes and research into how these programmes should be designed and operated. Some of the special provision for women has, in fact, been directly funded under the various acts (for details see Walker et al, 1974 and Elledge, 1978) through such federal agencies as the Office of Education (v. Mezirow and Rose, 1978) and the Department of Labour, particularly the Women's Bureau (v. Wells, 1971 and 1974). Colleges and universities have also taken a lead in this work, often in conjunction with a charitable foundation or some other national or state organisation, for example, the Carnegie Corporation and the American Association of Junior and Community Colleges (v. AACJC, 1977 and Eliason, 1977). In addition to the Women's Bureau, the Federal Women's Programme and the State Commissions on the Status of Women amongst others, have acted as pressure groups to promote the growth of opportunities for women (v. Department of Employment, 1975).

It is not necessarily the case, however, that increased opportunities for women follow only as a result of legislation. In Sweden, which has become renowned for its progress towards equality between the sexes, only the minimum of legislation has been passed to ensure equal rights; the Swedes do not have equal pay and sex discrimination acts as such. The Swedish view is outlined by Sandberg (1975) in her report for the Advisory Council to the Prime Minister on Equality between Men and Women, in which she says:

> 'The experiences gained from the work on behalf of equality of the sexes in Sweden clearly show that it is not enough to give women and men equal legal rights or to abolish direct discrimination. In addition, measures which especially favour women in the job world will have to be taken for a transitional period, as well as measures which enable women to take active part in union and political affairs. Measures are also needed to encourage men to apply for more jobs in traditionally female occupations and in the care of children.'

The alternative pathway which Sweden has chosen depends to a large extent on education and training and on providing financial and other help (i.e. child-care facilities) to enable men and women to avail themselves of these opportunities. The Swedes have recognised that 'a certain degree of basic security is required before sexual equality can be achieved, and this security - cultivated in Sweden since the 1930s - is derived from a wide variety of benefits' (Swedish Institute, 1979). Equal opportunities in Sweden, it should also be mentioned, have been greatly aided by the 'remarkable degree of consensus among the influential organisations and individuals in Sweden, especially the government, the employers and the trade unions' (Department of Employment, 1975). Notable amongst such bodies have been the long-standing Frederika Bremer Association (women's pressure group founded in 1884) and more recently the Advisory Council on Equality which was established in 1972. In 1976,this was superseded by the Committee on Equality Between Men and Women which is composed of members of the five political parties in the Swedish parliament. The Committee began work in 1977 on a national plan for equality and in 1979 turned its attention to women returners (Swedish Institute, 1979).

The EEC provides a further model for resolving inequalities of opportunity between men and women which embraces elements from both the American and Swedish examples. The Council of Ministers of the EEC (v. CEC*, 1978) has sought to bring into line the equal opportunities policies of its member states with the following directives:

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*Commission of the European Communities

1975 Equal pay for men and women.

1976 Non-discrimination against women in employment and work.

1978 Progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security.

It is, however, up to each country to decide how to implement these directives; a factor which has inevitably led to differing interpretations of their meaning, especially over the equal pay recommendation. It is realised that such measures alone will not alleviate inequality and the EEC has a second powerful instrument - the European Social Fund which is able to fund programmes for vocational training, resettlement of workers and improving the employment situation. In 1978, when opportunities for women were first included within its budget, eight million European Units of Account (EUA) were allocated for women's programmes; in 1979 this was increased to 18million. It is interesting to note that in his article on the working of the Fund its director, Mr. W. Stabenow, claims that the Commission is wanting further applications within this field (Stabenow, 1979). Women's programmes are currently running far behind other areas of concern; in 1979 the allocation for young people utilised some 230 million EUA compared with the 18 million for women. In order to promote the exchange of ideas and information, the European Commission has established the Information Service for Women's Organisations and Press and produced the bulletin 'Women of Europe'. Despite all these measures, however, it is realised that real equality or, as some prefer to call it, 'equity', between men and women will only be achieved gradually because of the heterogeneous mix of cultures, legislatures and attitudes which comprises the EEC (CEC, 1978).

5.3 The First Step - The Influence of Women's Organisations

It has been observed earlier that the United States has established, at both federal and state level, special agencies to promote and advise upon the development of equal rights and opportunities for women. The influence of women's organisations in this area also merits mention because, as in the United Kingdom, they have acted as pressure and support groups trying to produce a favourable climate in which women can take a more equal role in society and have encouraged, for instance, the setting up of leadership training programmes for women and campus-based self-help groups amongst female students. Undoubtedly the uniquely American influences which gave rise to sororities and the like have helped to provide a suitable atmosphere for these groups to develop. However, in common with Britain it appears that bridging provision for women has not grown directly out of the feminist movement but has started as a result of initiatives by experienced tutors.

In contrast, in much of Europe women's organisations have been, and still are, closely involved with both awareness-raising and bridging courses for women. In the Netherlands, where women have had a rather low participation rate in education, employment and the political sphere, several such organisations have become active. The long-established Association for Women's Interests, Women's Work and Equal Citizenship, is one of nine organisations which since 1972 have been involved in providing political education for women (v. Ministry of Cultural Affairs and Social Welfare, 1977). Within the last five years 'VOS' ('Women's Orientation to Society') courses have become increasingly popular with women throughout the Netherlands although they originally began in North Holland for women of low educational background (v. Noordenbos, 1979). In these courses no formal curriculum is offered but women are encouraged to discuss topics outside their experiences as housewives. Continuing her description of this type of education, Noordenbos commented that 'over five years of experience of VOS work has proven that many women, once they have begun their process of self-awareness, wish to continue further and see openings for new possibilities for themselves'. Not surprisingly, these initiatives have resulted in the recent growth of other opportunities for Dutch women which could be more truly termed bridging courses, and examples of these will be described later.

Having identified the need for increasing women's emancipation a first priority in the Netherlands was to develop ways of coordinating the different women's groups and of providing leadership training for women to take charge of the new schemes. Until 1975 this coordination was provided jointly by the National Women's Council and the Dutch Women's Committee and its Information and Documentation Centre. Since that date the Dutch Women's Council has taken over such work and now includes some 55 different organisations with its activities being divided into three sections - Permanent or Continuing Education, Social Services and International Work (v. Ministry of Cultural Affairs and Social Welfare, 1977). Acting in parallel with the Council is the National Advisory Emancipation Committee which was established in 1974 by the Prime Minister to act as a central policy-making body. Leadership training has been promoted at national level by the Continuing Education Section of the Council and also by local support groups. One example is the 'EVA bijt door' project started in Amersfoot under the auspices of the Netherlands Association for Adult Education. 'EVA' stands for 'Emancipatory Educational Advisory Group for Women' and the project is concerned with supporting, advising and informing women engaged in equal opportunities work (EVA bijt door Information Sheet).

The influences and infra-structure which have moulded the new initiatives for Dutch women contrast with the British situation where bridging and women's studies courses have tended to develop along parallel lines rather than one giving birth to the other. The Dutch developments are appropriate to the situation in which inequality between men and women has been much more marked than in Britain.

To some extent, elements of the Dutch model are mirrored in at least two other European countries, Belgium and Denmark. In 1965 the Women's Centre for Meetings and Exchange of Ideas was established in Brussels to provide facilities for meetings and educational/vocational courses for women especially in the socio-economic and political fields (v. EBAE/ICAE, 1979). Two years later the first meeting entitled 'Connaissance et Vie d'Aujourdhui' (CVA) (Understanding and Life Today) also began in Brussels with 27 women students. Ten years later the same organisation was running twice-weekly meetings in an auditorium of the Royal Library for audiences of 300 women. The CVA programmes now exist in some 15 other towns and cities of Belgium and aim to provide daytime lectures and discussion meetings on a variety of topics. These are particularly aimed at housewives and other women who want to further their education, and not surprisingly have provided a jumping-off point for many (v. Bernard-Vérant, 1977). In Denmark emancipatory programmes were developed in response to the call for greater participation by women in Danish political life as far back as 1944. Entitled 'Folkevirke' ('What is Done by the People') these initiatives were originally aimed at increasing the awareness of women voters but have since diversified into discussion and training sessions on most aspects of Danish life and are utilised by women returners as a first step. The Folkevirke are organised locally by members of different organisations with some government support, although the meetings themselves appear to have a loose structure (v. Loiborg, 1979).

5.4 General - Curriculum Bridging Programmes

5.4.1 North America

In 1971 Wells surveyed some 450 continuing education programmes and services for women in the United States. In Wells (1974), when more recent developments were discussed, it was estimated that over 500 special opportunities for adult women were then available. Three years later Eliason (1977(a)) stated that women students numbered over two million in the junior and community colleges of America and that 'women are the only population group in Higher Education that has shown a measurable growth over the past five years'. The junior and community colleges (otherwise known as 'two-year colleges', cf. the 'four-year colleges' and universities which offer degree-level courses) have become the major centres of continuing education for women because of their willingness to introduce flexibility into their curriculum and timetable. Referring to this type of establishment, Steele (1974) considered that 'the community college is uniquely qualified to serve the needs of those women who are attracted by convenient location, low cost, an open-door policy and a variety of offerings to meet diversified interests'. In an evaluation of American bridging programmes for women, Mezirow and Rose (1978) commented, however, that women's re-entry programmes characteristically functioned with small staffs and limited resources.

It is difficult for the outsider to piece together a rounded picture of the many general-curriculum re-entry programmes available for women in the United States. An overview is best left to someone who has first-hand experience of the courses. General-curriculum programmes are those that can be compared with the Return-To-Work opportunities, particularly the NOW courses (described in Chapter Three) which tend to look beyond the classroom to the world of work and personal growth. In an evaluation of the range of programmes for women in the community colleges, Rose (1977) was able, despite 'a wide variety in format, content and general approach', to identify three basic types of course:

(i) the community-oriented programme which provides help and guidance to women making changes in their lives;

(ii) the student-oriented programme which is designed for women who will be students in the college;

(iii) the comprehensive programme which includes both community and student orientation. These are relatively uncommon but are growing in number.

'Each type of program', according to Rose, 'has the same basic offerings - counselling courses, child-care, testing, public events, a resource library and self-help groups'. In many respects, it was concluded, all these courses provide 'unique opportunities within the academic setting' and 'their emphasis on personal growth and change is beginning to be replicated in other areas of the college'.

The two types of course named above which fall within the general-curriculum heading are the community and the comprehensive programmes. One example of a 'community' type of course is the 'Developing New Horizons for Women' programme run by George Washington University (Royce, 1968). This is a 15-week course which has the aims of helping women 'to look at one's total life-span in order to formulate goals, both long-range and short-range and clarify what steps must be taken to achieve these goals'. The course is split into five-week cycles.

The first cycle comprises formal, general-interest lectures, and in the second, students separate into small groups (by educational background) for an informal exchange of ideas, aptitude and interest testing and oral and written assignments. In the third cycle the groups re-unite for lectures on job and study opportunities. Each course is funded wholly by fees and applicants are selected on a first come, first served basis.

San José College in California provides the setting for the Women's Re-Entry Program' (WREP), an example of a 'comprehensive' type of bridging course which offers women 'a general education that serves as a foundation for diverse career, educational and/or personal goals' (v. Alexandra, 1976). The first semester of this one-year course includes English, Sociology, Health, Career Planning and Study Skills and the second, Speech, Biology and one other option. The course is primarily aimed at low-income, urban women, many of whom are heads of one-parent families which make up a fair proportion of the San José community. Other such bridging courses are to be found under some quite colourful names, for example, 'Everything You've Ever Wanted to Know About Returning to Work' (Cuyagoga Community College, Ohio), 'EVE' (Syracuse University), and 'The Mature Woman: Self Discovery and Wider Horizons' (University of North Carolina).

As in the United Kingdom, the charge is often laid against bridging courses in America that they attract students from a relatively narrow socio-economic band. In 1971 Wells commented, 'there is still a large un-met need for vocationally-oriented programmes, including catch-up and brush-up courses to help low-income women move from entry-level jobs up career ladders...'. According to Eliason (1977(a)) this same problem was still apparent six years later. The San José WREP programme is one of the few aimed at alleviating the problems of the poorer American woman. Two colleges in New York, however, have also attempted to analyse the needs of this disadvantaged group and design suitable compensatory programmes. These are Staten Island Community College (v. Adickes and Wortham, 1976) and Manhattan Community College (v. Chamberlain, 1971).

Apart from the MSC-sponsored 'Wider Opportunities for Women', Britain has few bridging courses which provide adult women with the opportunity for job sampling and/or work experience. In both North America and Europe re-entry programmes are often closely linked with the world of work and tend to integrate these opportunities more frequently into the course curriculum. The results of a major study of adult learners conducted by the American National Advisory Council on Continuing Education in 1975 revealed that almost 80 per cent of adult students (of whom well over half were women) wanted vocationally-oriented courses. On-the-job training schemes in America are known as 'vocational internships' and several centres of continuing education offer combined study and work experience opportunities, for example South Utah State College (v. Wells, 1971) and the Women's Talent Corporation (v. Royce, 1968). The latter scheme was developed to cater for low-income unemployed women in New York who had only limited skills but high motivation and, unlike many American opportunities, the women received payment to attend the course. The curriculum comprised eight weeks of 'classroom orientation' which made extensive use of role-playing and discussion followed by six months of 'field-work training'. Royce reported that most of the employers or agencies involved in this venture were willing to take over half the cost of trainee stipends.

Canada, too, has some Federal training schemes, which include 'work adjustment training' for those who lack self-confidence at work, basic educational programmes and retraining opportunities. Since 1972 training allowances have been made more widely available so that housewives can make use of them. Under these new rules and because of the increased emphasis on the needs of women (partly due to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women which reported in 1970) the proportion of women entering training courses increased from 22 per cent in 1971 to 39 per cent in 1973 (Department of Employment, 1975).

5.4.2 Europe

In Europe general bridging opportunities for women are much less common than in the United States. One of the best known schemes on the continent is the 'Retravailler' programme started in Paris by Evelyn Sullerot in 1973 with backing from the French Ministry of Education. Madame Sullerot was well-qualified to start such a scheme, having made a series of studies on the position of women in European society of which 'L'Emploi des Femmes et ses Problèmes dans les Etats Membres de la Communauté Européenne' (Sullerot, 1970) for the CEC is one of the most widely quoted documents on the subject. The Retravailler courses are of five weeks duration with daily lessons which include 'exercises on concentrating, logic, dexterity, vocabulary, numeracy and self-expression' (King, 1975) in addition to talks on study and career openings and the practicalities of returning to work. After two years, it has been claimed (EBAE/ICAE, 1979), all those women seeking a return to work have found a position. The Retravailler students are fortunate in having good follow-up procedures. A trained counsellor liaises between students, tutors and employers. In a number of French towns a second re-entry scheme arranged by an organisation known as 'UFCS' provides job sampling opportunities for women currently without employment in addition to offering help with study and communication skills, confidence-building and job opportunities. The course lasts for nine weeks and student fees are related to their means (EBAE/ICAE, 1979).

Sweden has a long-standing tradition of vocational training and many opportunities exist for both men and women (v. Department of Employment, 1975; King, 1975). The Swedish Labour Market Board and the National Board of Education have established a four to six week re-entry course which is of special use to women and for which grants are provided. Entitled 'Working Life and Training', the programme comprises social studies, job opportunities, including work experience, and vocational guidance. Similar schemes are available in Denmark, where the Ministry of Labour runs a two-week orientation course for women re-entrants (v. Seear, 1971), and in Norway a short course is organised by the Norwegian Labour Directorate (v. Selid, 1968). Germany, too, has made a strong commitment to providing vocational training for its citizens and like several other European countries such as Sweden, France and Belgium, enables adults to take paid educational leave and/or receive generous stipends while studying. In Britain such benefits are few and far between and in the present economic climate are even decreasing in availability. However, it was only in 1974 that a German law permitted housework to be classified as a job thus allowing married women to be able to take advantage of the training schemes on the same basis as other workers. The Federal Institute of Labour (Bundesanstalt für Arbeit) now has a special section dealing with women returners and provides them with three types of opportunities: on the job training, refresher and upgrading courses (v. King, 1975).

Seear (1971) reported that the People's University in Germany also runs bridging courses for women returners. Apparently most women prefer to take advantage of on-the-job programmes because they are available for part-time as well as full-time workers and provide a wage paid for in part by both the state and the employer. German women, therefore, would seem to be choosing specialised training rather than general-curriculum opportunities in educational institutions.

5.5 Return-To-Study Opportunities

5.5.1 North America

Return-To-Study opportunities include the 'student-oriented programmes' mentioned by Rose in Section 5.4 which he describes as 'bridge programmes'. Within this category are two kinds of opportunity which are somewhat ambiguously labelled the 'academic' and the 'non-academic' bridge. The academic programmes are usually credit courses through which women are admitted into the main stream college curriculum. Help is given with application and registration procedures and the women may stay together for a whole semester or more during which time they take special classes and are given extra support. Sometimes the women can sit-in on a number of subject options in order to discover to which ones they are best suited. The non-academic bridging programmes described by Royce are those for women already enrolled in the college and simply provide them with extra support via special counselling services and workshops, etc. These programmes may or may not attract a credit rating.

An example of an 'academic' bridging scheme is the women's re-entry programme at Diablo Valley College, California. Taines (1973) reported that the curriculum consisted of 'two integrated blocks of three basic general education courses' and all subjects were taught 'from the woman's perspective'. The various course units all provided credits towards the Associate of Arts Degree and were acceptable for transfer to university type institutions, although 82 per cent of the students chose to continue in the college after the special programme had been completed. The course ran for one semester and was timetabled during elementary school hours. Despite the fact that the classes were very much mixed according to the women's previous education, 85 per cent earned A and B averages in the end-of-course exams.

For further examples of RTS opportunities offered by colleges and universities within the United States the reader is referred to Wells (1971) where many such programmes are outlined which demonstrate American provision. For example, there are courses which enable women to take or sample a number of different subjects without satisfying the normal entry requirements, others which provide separate classes for returners for one year and then allow them to attend normal classes the next, and yet more which permit women to schedule classes in accordance with their commitments, by running the same subject options several times each week.

The study opportunities so far discussed are primarily for women returners; however, there are a number of others for adults generally from which women can benefit. The idea of the Associate Degree courses, mentioned earlier, was conceived many years ago to provide the first two years of a traditional university course and to help to screen the academically less qualified (v. Gilli et al, 1975). Today they are an accepted part of American Higher Education and resemble the British Dip.H.E. course. The courses can be taken on a part-time basis over a number of years by gradually building up the number of credits to the required level, and hence, are of particular use to women tied by domestic responsibility. It is interesting to note that many American re-entry programmes carry one or more credits towards the Associate of Arts degree qualification. America is far in advance of Britain both in its flexibility towards credit transfer and in its facilities for students to petition colleges for credit for 'life experience' so that their length of study for any qualification can be reduced. Commenting on this subject Wertheimer and Nelson (1977) stated that 'credits awarded for life experience are important adjustments of the traditional credentialling system and constitute recognition of learning that has occurred outside the formal setting'.

While there is no real parallel to the British Open University, the Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities, in cooperation with seventeen colleges and universities, has developed the 'University Without Walls' based at Antioch College. This university provides students of all ages with an individually-tutored programme which, in addition to standard course work, includes the use of audio-visual materials, T.V., travel and special seminars (v. Wells, 1971). Throughout the United States there are many other such opportunities for adults which provide a varying mix of distance learning materials, T.V. programmes, college-based classes, seminars and programmed learning facilities. Wells (1971) cites some of the institutions offering these facilities.

For students who do not complete a full high-school education the local Evening High Schools enable them to obtain this later in life; in these High School Equivalency exams can be taken which facilitate mature entry into degree-level programmes. The Evening High Schools, in other respects, are similar to British adult education establishments and, although daytime opportunities are increasing, evening study still provides the major form of second-chance education for American adults. While often the source of interest, it is probably true to say that innovative study opportunities such as programmed learning, the use of the media and write-your-own-curriculum projects (v. Colby, 1976) are still relatively few and far between in America. The majority of American women would appear to find their way back to education and a new career by a combination of essentially traditional methods. In terms of numbers of opportunities, and the degree of access, however, continuing education for women in America is far in advance of that in the United Kingdom.

5.5.2 Europe

Despite the differing traditions found in Western Europe, there are some similarities amongst the Return-To-Study provision of its various countries. Most Western countries have facilities akin to our own adult education centres. In several countries these are known as 'Folk High Schools'. In Germany the folk high schools (Volkshochschule or VHS) are, in the main, non-residential centres offering evening courses and an increasing number of daytime classes. However, the curricula chiefly studied by women remain in the fields of arts and crafts, office skills, social work or domestic science (Kallemeyer, 1979). This fact is even more marked in Scandinavian countries which also make a folk high school type of provision. However, in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Holland their folk high schools provide residential adult education. The Scandinavian evening schools form the major centres of part-time education.

The Netherlands has 12 folk high schools (Volkshogeschoolen) which offer liberal studies programmes of one week or more. There is also one folk high school in France which belongs to the same organisation, i.e. the International Secretariat for Dutch Folk High Schools. In

Sweden the number is much higher with 120 folk high schools in addition to over 30 evening schools which provide a high school type of education. Sweden also has a considerable number of municipal vocational colleges at which adults can undertake part-time courses and two adult high schools to which mature students can go for short but intensive periods of study, the rest of their studies taking the form of correspondence courses. Some of the Swedish folk high schools run special women's studies courses although some technical opportunities are now being made available. The mass media has also played an increasing role in adult education since 1967,when a state programme of television studies began which has since flourished (v. Sandland 1969, Hultin 1979). Denmark, which has a long tradition of folk high schools, opened its first women's folk high school early in 1979 and the Danes, Norwegians and Swedes are now coordinating their efforts in this field.

A new movement has taken place in the Netherlands since 1975 which has opened up new day-time study opportunities for adults, particularly women. The 'Moeder MAVO' pilot scheme began in three Dutch towns in 1975 and by the 1976/77 academic year 5580 students were enrolled in 41 day-time MAVOs and seven HAVOs across the Netherlands. 'MAVO' is the lowest level of Dutch secondary education, 'HAVO' the middle level and 'VWO', pre-university education. Not surprisingly these day-time classes have attracted an overwhelmingly high proportion of women (95%) compared with 51 per cent in the evening MAVO. The MAVO classes are open to anyone who did not complete their secondary education and provide a variety of subjects although facilities such as classrooms, laboratories and materials are still a problem because of competition with school-age children. Students can work towards a cumulative certificate of education at their own pace and take up study again after a break (v. Hootsmans, 1976).

In 1974 the Dutch Minister of Education and Culture inaugurated the Open School Committee which began work on the development of a multi-media curriculum for the 'Open School'. In 1977 three two-year pilot schemes with 1500 participants began, each dealing with a different target group. One such group comprised both single and married women. The aim of the pilot projects has been to develop new teaching methods and each project has a different emphasis. In that relating to women, the project concentrated on 'the role and significance of the mass media, the best didactic presentation of the subject matter, the most effective use of teaching areas and the function of counselling' (Stapel, 1976). The Open School programme is hoping to be able to adapt curricula to individual capabilities by providing courses in a modular framework while utilising existing adult education provision in an innovatory way. Evaluative reports of this project are now awaited.

Belgium has also been planning for an Open University type of scheme (La Cité, 1976(a) and (b)). The Belgium concept is for an open university which helps disadvantaged groups who did not complete their education, such as housewives, the unemployed and immigrants. Education will be offered at different levels by a variety of means. In addition to having or planning open school or university types of schemes, most European countries provide correspondence courses, usually via some national agency, and an increasing use is made of television study periods.

Little direct information was found on RTS type provision for women in France. It appears that adult men and women are able to make use of a variety of opportunities and since 1971 each company has had set aside one per cent of its total salaries for continuing education. This has led to many new courses being provided and special help being given to disadvantaged groups of women to allow them to attend these opportunities.

5.6 Counselling and Support Services for Women Returners

5.6.1 North America

Mention has already been made of the varying importance placed on counselling and advisory help for women in relation to British bridging courses. In America there is a much wider recognition of its work and in almost all centres of continuing education some special provision for counselling is made. One of the first integrated programmes for women in the United States placed a particular emphasis on counselling. The 'Minnesota Plan', as this once innovatory scheme has become known, laid the foundations for much bridging provision for women in America during the 1960s and 70s. Begun in 1960 at Minnesota University, the aims of the project were:

(i) to attempt to help girls and young women to foresee and plan for the interrupted multi-role lives they will lead;

(ii) to enable them to maintain intellectual skills and training throughout the family years;

(iii) to help the older woman to find activities, paid and unpaid, in which she can use her capacities in the fullest and most appropriate way (v. Schletzer et al, 1967; Seear, 1971).

The methodology of the plan is particularly interesting in that it did not consist of a special, separate programme for re-entry women, but it was rather 'an attempt to use the existing resources of the University of Minnesota to tackle the special educational needs of women, having first analysed the nature of these special needs'. The programme on offer to women included not only extensive counselling facilities but special communications and advertisement schemes, a child-care centre, liberal arts seminars, neighbourhood seminars, credit-transfer, small scholarships and an undergraduate programme to help young women to develop long- and short-term plans.

Within this framework the counselling element was approached on an individual basis because it was soon realised that arranging group sessions for individuals of differing backgrounds would be complex. However, in some American colleges 'peer-group counselling' has been attempted and deemed successful, as for example at Brevard Community College, Florida, where it forms part of the WENDI project (Women's Educational Development Incentive Programme). This counselling scheme is described in the following terms, 'it is not individual counselling in a group but it does call for the establishment of a climate characterised by warmth and acceptance which allows each individual to examine herself and her choice of action .... In such a group the individual cannot fail.' (Elledge, 1978). A somewhat different example of the group counselling of mature women at Mattatuck Community College is described by Andrews (1973).

Returning to the Minnesota Plan, a further foresighted element of its programme was the incorporation of counselling facilities for young women with the hope that if some guidance was provided prior to family commitments then it would make a later return that much more certain. Such a feature is almost wholly lacking within British further and higher educational provision. The Minnesota Plan has other implications for British developments in its coherency of design. A thorough research project to identify the need was conducted first, financial backing for a five-year project was secured and the project was evaluated and developed as it functioned and, perhaps most significant of all, it utilised existing provision rather than providing a set of new courses.

Of the many American colleges and universities which now have centres of continuing education, some have created facilities especially for women (v. Rechner, 1977). Whatever their organisation they provide a supportive base for women returners and gather together under one roof the range of back-up resources such as counselling which can ease a woman's return to college life and help her cope with some of the difficulties highlighted above. These centres are not the only source of support for adult women, however; such help is increasingly to be found amongst the students themselves. AWARE (Association for Women's Active Return to Education) is one of the more important inter-state organisations actively providing support for returners. Students on individual campuses have also created their own back-up groups such as 'WOTO' (Women Over Twenty One) at Santa Ana College, California, 'Retrieve', an organisation for college graduate returners at Nebraska University and 'The Women's Union' at Manhattan Community College which seeks to bring together women staff and students in an attempt to improve women's opportunities at the College. In Britain there is not the same tradition of organisation amongst peer groups within academic circles as in America.

Much emphasis is placed in America on enrolment and pre-enrolment counselling and workshops for women in order to 'help them face their own problems, help them prepare to return to school and help them handle specific hurdles such as registration', (Bulpitt, 1973). One such example is the four-day residential 'University Days' programme first run by West Virginia University in 1972 (v. Bower, 1972). It is interesting to note that in Australia, where the provision is similar to that in America, programmes such as the one run at Deakin University enable prospective students to enrol for a six-month, off-campus, pre-enrolment course during which they work through a 'counselling package'. Closer to enrolment the students attend Saturday workshops to discuss issues and problems with tutors (v. McDonald and Knight, 1979).

Helping potential students to decide which course is most suitable for them and at which college or university, is seen to be very much part of counselling. The American term usually given to services which help potential students to decide on colleges and courses is 'educational brokering'. During the 1970s in an attempt to tap the 26 million adults which, it is estimated, do not participate in formal study, these brokerage services have proliferated. A National Centre for Educational Brokering has been established in Washington and in its Directory 175 counselling programmes in 41 states are cited (ACACE, 1979(b)). A number of counselling facilities have been specifically developed to cater for American women. These are usually to be found within a university or college centre of continuing education such as WIAS (Women's Information and Advisory Centre) at the University of Maine (v. Royce, 1968).

In order to inform the potential learner adequately, be it man or woman, the counsellors need to have an extensive fund of information to hand. In an early scheme in Providence, Rhode Island, entitled ARISE (Adult Referral and Information Service) the counsellors compiled a directory of opportunities which was updated annually (v. Mulvey et al, 1968). Very recently the idea of utilising a computer data bank for such information has been put into practice. [illegible] example of this is the 'Metrodoc' project in Toronto, Canada, which maintains a computer file of over 80,000 learning opportunities. Printed directories of its information are available in public libraries around the city (v. Bertelsen, 1979).

Despite such facilities, however, there is evidence of difficulty in attracting women into the continuing education programmes available. After completing an extensive survey of women in community and junior colleges, Eliason (1977(a)) made a plea for increased outreach work and advertisement in order to inform more students from a wider social spectrum, claiming that the study had revealed 'an alarming high level of student unawareness of educational resources and services offered by the colleges surveyed'. Continuing on this theme, Agin and Prather (1977) commented, 'Women are not generally knowledgeable of the power structure within the system, do not know the rules of the game and are largely unprepared for employment opportunities'. Within the United States recruiting students by special canvassers, who were often past or present college students themselves or tutors, has been attempted in the North Carolina Community College System (Jefferies, 1975).

In addition to her recommendation for more outreach work amongst women, Eliason (1977(b)) considered that many women were being frightened away from colleges as a result of first-contact experiences, and this may well be the case in Britain also. She advocated 'gate-keeper' training for those manning switchboards and information desks so that they might be more sympathetic to women returners in the future.

5.6.2 Europe

As indicated above, counselling and support services for adults generally, let alone women, are scarce throughout Europe and specific information about them is hard to find. In an extract from 'Learning Opportunities for Adults' (OECD, 1977) it was stated that guidance and counselling services were available in Austria, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom (in addition to Canada and the United States) but that in all countries the provision was still inadequate. Cologne in Germany has one well-established educational advisory centre (Bildungsberatungs Zenter), the Netherlands has the 'Committee for the Promotion of Local Networks' to coordinate educational services for

Dutch adults, the Scandinavian countries and France run short orientation and vocational guidance courses for adults who are unemployed, returners, or who wish to change jobs, which could be classed as counselling provision. In terms of outreach projects to advise and inform European women of the opportunities open to them, there has been one successful scheme in Sweden known as the 'Forvux Experiment', which used peer-group canvassers to approach potential students (v. Bertelsen, 1979) and in Finland one which is especially directed towards housewives (v. Kekkonen, 1979).

5.7 Students and Problems - The American Research

Several surveys have attempted to construct profiles of the type of adult women taking up opportunities in American colleges and universities. The results of one project at Skyline College, California are typical of many (v. Steel, 1974). Of 475 women responding to the questionnaire at Skyline College:

50% were over 40 years of age
75% were married
90% had children
50% had a job outside the home
39% had only a high-school education or less
75% had been out of college for 10 years or more
10% were full-time students at the college

Some of the difficulties faced by adult returners were highlighted by Spence (1975). Their main problems in relation to those of the normal college or university student were identified as being:

(i) lower educational aspirations;
(ii) inability to compete in the classroom;
(iii) lower levels of communication skills, which made it more difficult to articulate needs;

(iv) lower inter-personal competencies;

(v) lack of patience with assignments which were not perceived as relevant to their needs;

(vi) too little time in the classroom to learn the coping skills needed to adjust to a continually changing work world.

Some idea of the problems which particularly affect women returners has been gained from a study conducted at Fresno City College, California. The students were asked to identify factors which hindered their progress and attendance at the college (v. Richards, 1976). The results showed that eight problems were common amongst the women. These were - shortage of time, school-related anxiety, role conflicts, money problems, child care, study skills, counselling deficiencies and problems with instructors. Sixty per cent of the women returning questionnaires also reported that their families were not supportive of their return. The findings of this study were echoed by those of another at Alabama University (v. Owens and Emplaincourt, 1977) which sought to question a sample of women not enrolled in continuing education programmes, and many of this sample cited similar reasons for their not taking up opportunities in continuing education. The special problems of working class women were outlined in a study at Staten Island Community College (v. Adickes and Wortham, 1976). For further details of research which has concentrated upon women returners and their needs, the reader is referred to Agin and Prather (1976) and Lyman-Viera and Boggs (1976).

Other American studies have attempted to explore women's learning patterns and preferences and to discover whether they differ appreciably from those of men in similar situations. Gaining an understanding of such factors is important to the design of any bridging-type provision for women. In a study of adult women learners, Owens and Emplaincourt

(1977) found that, on questioning over a hundred women on the form of learning which would suit them the best,

42% preferred lectures or classes
24% " short-term conferences or workshops
13% " on-the-job training or internships
21% " various other forms of learning

and that the women were equally divided in their preference for morning or evening classes. This preference for traditional classroom settings was echoed by another study which compared men and women's preferred learning styles using a 'Learning Style Inventory' (Brainard and Ommen, 1977). This study indicated that compared with men, women preferred:

(i) a more structured learning environment (men indicated a more pronounced need for competitiveness and independence)

(ii) a class content related to people and qualitative dimensions (men preferred subjects with a high numeric and/or inanimate content)

(iii) learning by listening
(men preferred learning by direct experience

A further study on the educational needs of working, blue-collar women (Wertheimer and Nelson, 1977) reported that those things women learned best in a classroom setting employed discussion methods and provided group support and interaction. They learned from each other as well as from the instructor. Women also gained from learning situations using the media if these were accompanied by back-up counselling, but Wertheimer and Nelson felt that other innovations were less helpful for women. 'Independent study is not their idea of satisfactory education; they are uneasy in "distance education", an academic situation where they must set their own pace when they don't even know the rules.' In a study of the psychological and practical needs of women re-entrants, Richards (1976) reported, after a review of previous work, that women have lower self-esteem ratings than men. Self-esteem directly influences the type of task engaged upon as well as the task performance itself. As a result it was considered that the first semester of a re-entry programme was critical for returning women who needed special counselling and support throughout this period. In an assessment of American programmes, Mezirow and Rose (1978) felt that bridging courses for women provided 'a protective and supportive staging area' in which women could gain confidence and that 'class assignments tend to recognise the strong fear of failure and embarrassment that re-entry women must often overcome before they can fulfil their impressive academic potential'.

5.8 Non-traditional Courses and Careers

5.8.1 North America

Because of the importance attached to opportunities for women of a non-traditional nature, this topic has been selected for the concluding section of this review. Little mention has been made so far of the extent to which bridging courses in North America or Europe provide women with skills which enable them to choose from a wide range of occupations. At a workshop on Women in Science and Technology it was commented (v. Ruina, ed., 1973) that 'about one third of all American students pass through high school by way of what we call the 'general curriculum', a type of education which leaves its graduates neither trained with a marketable skill nor qualified to pursue further education.' All western countries face the same dilemma - how to open up new fields for their still under-developed pool of female expertise - and in most this challenge is only now beginning to be met. During the 1960s and most of the 1970s 'continuing education for women' has, in reality, meant continuing down traditional pathways.

In an evaluation of the effectiveness of MDTA training schemes for women (courses initiated in the United States under the 1962 Manpower Development and Training Act (Walker et al, 1974)) it was concluded that:

(i) female students were generally being trained in the same occupation as their last job (which was inevitably in a traditional field);

(ii) there was little enrolment by men and women in courses traditionally reserved for the opposite sex;

(iii) while training enabled men to move to higher paying craft occupations from service jobs, it provided only skill-upgrading for women in these similar (low paying) occupations;

(iv) there is little emphasis on placing females in more desirable, less stereotyped, occupations.

In another survey of junior and community colleges (Boyer, 1973) college presidents were asked to identify if there had been an increase or decrease of women students in 14 different technical occupational programmes and 336 colleges replied. From the data it appeared that in only four occupations, all of which in American terms were 'neutral' or 'transitional' jobs (i.e. neither traditionally male or female) had women's enrolment increased. The four jobs were accounting, management, computer technology, marketing and retail. In such other traditionally male occupations as drafting, engineering (all types), industrial supervision, transportation and wholesaling female students were even more scarce than previously. Commenting on the needs of working women

Wertheimer and Nelson (1977) bemoaned the fact that 'few (continuing education courses) attempt to provide an educational structure that combines credit with the personal/psychological, economic and institutional support necessary if women are to break out of their job ghettos.' With such information and opinion available within the United States it is not surprising that the U.S. government has sought to take affirmative action through legislation (see Section 5.2) to change this situation. It is, however, too early to judge how successful this has been.

The concept of men and women playing equal roles in all manner of occupations involves vast change and although this is beginning it will inevitably be a slow process. In its study of women in community colleges the AACJC (1977) commented that 'many women are still insecure about wanting to work at a "man's" job. Even if their interest is high and they feel that they could master the skills it is hard for many women to compete in areas where there have often been no female predecessors.' Agin and Prather (1977) identify three factors which act against such developments:

(i) the enculturation (socialisation) of women;
(ii) society's general expectations for women;
(iii) the tendency of institutions and organisations 'to remain in motion at a relatively constant rate'.

Taking the enculturation of women one stage further, O'Leary (1974) formed the opinion that 'the woman is caught in a double bind: she will choose a task that is most congruent with her self-perceptions such as a housewife, or sex-role affiliation occupations, i.e. nursing, elementary teaching.... etc.'

Examples of some of the American programmes which are available for adult women to provide them with a greater freedom of occupational choice are outlined below:

(i) 'The Apprenticeship Outreach Program' - initiated in 1974 by the Employment and Training Administration, this seeks to place women in training and jobs within the skilled field (v. Wertheimer and Nelson, 1977).

(ii) 'Better Jobs for Women' - an apprenticeship programme which helps women to enrol in trade and industrial courses, often at pre-apprenticeship level. The programme sponsored by the YWCA in Denver is one of the initiatives which are growing at a faster rate than those for men (v. Wertheimer and Nelson, 1977).

(iii) 'New View' (The New Vocational Internship Education for Women) - located at Foothill- De Anza Community College in California, this is an innovative scheme for employment in technical careers. The main part of the curriculum comprises a one-year paid internship in technical fields at NASA/Ames Centre in addition to at least two academic course options related to specific career goals, group and individual counselling, testing and evaluation, career planning and job finding. An evaluation of this course judged it a considerable success and the programme has subsequently been expanded (v. Davidson and Shoenhair, 1976).

(iv) 'Work Opportunities for Women' - situated at Brevard College, Florida, this helps to place disadvantaged women in non-traditional vocational training and teaching programmes at the college, and arranges on-the-job training and direct placement in non-traditional jobs (v. Elledge, 1978).

(v) 'Pre-trades Training for Women' - a pilot scheme organised and sponsored by the Women's Employment Bureau in Winnipeg in Canada. The project has several characteristics in common with the British WOW courses. The pre-trades course lasts six weeks with the first concentrating on self-assessment and job opportunities, the next three weeks involved in touring workshops and the last two weeks with work experience, communication and interview skills. After the pilot courses the students felt that they would have benefited from an even longer course and from having a designated person to act as organiser and as coordinator. It is planned that future courses will take account of these recommendations (v. WEB, 1976).

(vi) Courses similar to the Pre-Trades Training programmes have also been held in British Columbia ('Women's Exploratory Apprenticeship Training') and Ontario 'Job Search and Readiness Training') (WEB, 1976).

In the American literature the following positive strategies have been suggested which might help women to broaden their job and career horizons:

(i) Better outreach and recruitment programmes using women in publicity and as recruiters (Boyer, 1973; Jefferies, 1975 and Eliason, 1977).

(ii) The increased use of women role models in science and technical departments of colleges and universities.

(iii) The provision of special counselling for women to motivate them towards non-traditional courses and careers and improve their self-concepts.

(iv) The provision of counselling for young women.

(v) The re-training of counsellors in both colleges and high schools (Boyer, 1973; Ruina, 1973; Walker et al, 1974; Richards, 1976 and Elledge, 1978). Ruina commented, 'counsellors are more likely to attend conferences about psychology than about the job market so they often don't realise that the jobs of the future for girls might be electronic technicians, engineers, dentists and accountants.'

(vi) The feminisation of the curriculum involving the revision of written materials and textbooks to eliminate male pronouns, remove male and female stereotypes and increase female role models in the texts (Boyer, 1973 and Parsons, 1977).

(vii) The conducting of extensive curricular reviews together with the creation of more courses and training openings in non-traditional skills and technologies and the easing of women's enrolment in mixed classes (Walker et al, 1974 and Eliason, 1977).

(viii) The improvement of teachers' attitudes (particularly those of male teachers) by in-service training and seminars; the sensitisation of teachers about the influence they exert through their transmission of the curriculum (Ruina, 1973; Wertheimer and Nelson, 1977). Ruina (1977) highlights this issue: 'science and technology may not be basically unattractive to girls, but the attitudes of male science teachers certainly makes a difference'.

(ix) The incorporation of maths and science in different areas of the curriculum, e.g. by encouraging humanities teachers to use some of the literature about science and scientists. Hughes (1977) and Fennema (1979) have advocated that initiatives be made to counteract 'maths avoidance' in girls and women as maths is fundamental to the understanding of all scientific subjects and necessary to gain access to many higher education courses.

5.8.2 Europe

Whether it be in the Moeder MAVO of the Netherlands, the Folk High Schools of Scandinavia or Germany or even the nationally-organised vocational training schemes of each European country, most general Return-To-Work or Return-To-Study opportunities tend to have a traditional course content which does not provide sufficient insights into the worlds of science and technology, and women form only a small percentage in programmes of a non-traditional nature.

The recognition that a dual labour market still existed in Sweden during the early 1970s led the Swedish government to look for new measures to break down the barriers between that which was men's work and that which was women's. In 1973 the now famous Kristianstad pilot scheme was inaugurated in an attempt to help women move into traditionally male skilled occupations. The scheme was first sited at Kristianstad in Southern Sweden because here opportunities in local manufacturing were good but there were many unemployed women. The project has now expanded to six out of Sweden's 24 counties and 100 companies are involved. The project was organised in the following manner: local adjustment groups in the cooperating firms were established to work out plans and provide support for female trainees, the County Employment Board ran information days and interested women then attended a four-week course of general and practical information as well as job sampling so that individual women could 'feel their way towards a suitable position'. During the four-week course the women were paid out of government funds and at the end of the course most had found jobs which they were satisfied with. The early evaluation of the scheme concluded that in most aspects the scheme had been a considerable success; there were few jobs that women couldn't do and those that did exist were too heavy for men as well (Millgardh, 1975; King, 1975).

A similar project to the above has recently been launched in Belgium. The idea was initiated in 1975 by the Belgian Ministry of Employment and Labour for two sub-regions in which, like Sweden, there is a high rate of female unemployment generally but non-traditional possibilities exist. Two teams of researchers began the groundwork in 1978 in each region and the actual experimental training is due to begin as soon as the teams report.

From the many proposals which are to be found in the European literature relating to women in non-traditional roles it appears that, like Belgium, and the Dutch with their Open School project, other European countries are at present looking at their educational/vocational provision to see how new initiatives for women might be developed. Those that don't already have paid educational leave or grants for adult students are considering how these might be introduced and increasingly governmental legislation is being proposed to surmount legal barriers to equality. The real problems to equity of access for men and women, however, lie elsewhere. Child-care is one particular hurdle for many women, especially if the child or children are under three. Even in Sweden and in France, where a large percentage of the over three-year-olds are cared for in government run Ecoles Maternelles, this is still considered a problem. Early closing of German schools and the relatively small numbers of day-care places for nursery-age children are two of the major reasons for the low participation of German women in training schemes. A 1970 survey revealed that only 17 per cent of all trainees were women, although the situation was improving (King, 1975).

While in such countries as the Netherlands, Belgium and much of Scandinavia much of the special provision for women is given over to raising women's awareness and widening their aspirations, a necessary precursor to their moving into non-traditional courses and careers, several other countries have still to reach this stage. In, for example, Italy, Spain, Austria and Switzerland the vast proportion of women still fulfil a very traditional role. In Russia and Eastern Europe women do play a much more equal part in education and employment. The relatively high percentage of female engineers (20-30%) and even higher percentage of doctors are often cited to back up the claims by these countries that equal opportunities exist. Girls and boys are both encouraged towards science and technology not only because of the need for high industrial output but also because a knowledge of science is felt to help dispel religious beliefs and hence promote Marxist philosophy. An examination of the small percentages of women at the very top of Russian and Eastern European professions and political life, however, leads to the realisation that even here women are only a little way down the road to real equality.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 General

(1) Bridging courses are relatively new features of Further Education, having been developed over the last ten years, many within the last five and this is also true within Europe. In the United States bridging courses have had a longer history.

(2) The courses can be grouped into two broad categories, those that help women (and men) to return to and to increase their ability to study (RTS courses) by either a general or a specialised curriculum, and those that look beyond the classroom to the world of work and a possible first or second career (RTW courses). The RTW courses, of which the NOW-type opportunities are the most common, are more specifically geared to the needs of mature women than those classified as RTS. Such courses are especially useful for women who do not have any definite career plans as they seek to provide their students with general information on further study and job opportunities, to help them with study and communication skills and to advise them on the practical aspects of a return to work.

(3) Unless specially designated under Clause 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act, all bridging courses must be open to both men and women. In practice, the RTS courses are mixed with women usually in the majority while many of the RTW opportunities attract an all-woman take-up.

(4) The distribution of courses is uneven throughout Britain with very few being located within rural areas. Return-To-Study courses are more numerous than RTW opportunities which tend to be located in and around some of the major commercial and industrial centres. London itself has a number of RTS courses but scarcely any that can be classified as RTW.

(5) Bridging courses tend to be found where adult education as a whole is flourishing, the bridging course forming one element in a network of local provision. Tutors of neighbouring colleges, polytechnics and universities have in some cases built up informal links with each other so that students can be referred to the course best suited to their needs. In a few instances some of these links have been formalised so that, on successfully completing a bridging course, students have a right of entry into higher level courses.

(6) The majority of courses have been started by experienced tutors who have perceived gaps in their provision for adult students. The courses do not appear to have developed directly out of the feminist movement, as seems to have been the case in some other European countries, but rather have arisen as a result of such diverse influences as the WEA, the adult literacy movement, the need for preparatory provision for the Open University and TOPS training courses and the desire to provide alternative study opportunities for adults to traditional 'O' and 'A' level programmes.

(7) Because many bridging courses have been initiated in response to local needs they tend to be highly individual in both character and name. Courses of similar name, for instance, may have different curricula and vice versa. This creates problems for those, such

as potential students, who are trying to locate and identify such opportunities. Efforts to coordinate and advertise bridging-course provision on a regional and national level, through the organisation of conferences and workshops for tutors and the publication of guides for mature students, have only just begun.

(8) The research, here and abroad, indicates that the demand for bridging courses is often latent rather than explicit and that women are often ill-informed of the opportunities open to them. This places the onus on the providers to identify and anticipate student needs.

(9) Information from questionnaires administered to 174 women attending a variety of bridging courses revealed that most students had first learned of the courses from either the college prospectus or the local paper. Other evidence from the present research and elsewhere suggests, however, that women can encounter difficulties in contacting the colleges for further information and advice. This indicates that there is a need for better 'gatekeeper' training for those manning college switchboards and information desks to alert them to the presence of bridging courses within the college.

6.2 Curricular Issues

(1) Considerable variation was found amongst courses in the RTS and RTW groupings in terms of structure and curriculum. In the RTS category some bridging courses involve almost wholly distance learning techniques, thus reducing the need to attend college; others can be taken part-time during the evening and/or daytime and there are those which require full-time study at either a residential or non-residential centre.

(2) In many cases the curriculum of both the RTS and NOW courses is strongly biased towards arts and social science subjects and/or providing information on further study and job opportunities in these areas. Maths, science and technology topics may have little time spent on them if they are present at all. This finding has particular implications for the jobs and careers open to women attending bridging courses. Where courses were 'all-departmental' ventures, however, there was little or no evidence of curricular bias, although tutors on these courses reported that women still tended to choose arts and social science options in preference to maths, science and technology. The reasons for the biased curricula of some bridging courses may be associated with the following:

(i) the location of the course within a general, liberal, social science or adult education department where the expertise available is mainly in the arts and social sciences.

(ii) a tendency among the heads of such departments in some colleges to seek to develop their provision through offering adult education and other non-advanced courses so as not to compete directly for resources with science and technical departments.

(iii) a shortage of experienced science teachers within tertiary education. Heads of science and technical departments may consider that their staff are fully extended providing day and block release courses for youngsters; this fact may explain why few specialised bridging initiatives have arisen from such departments.

(3) On first starting a bridging course, mature students, particularly women, tend to be characterised by having low confidence, difficulty in organising their study time, a fear of participating in discussions, a lack of critical ability, lower concentration and memorising ability than younger students, and in addition may require a longer time to settle into the course. Many of these problems relate to poor study techniques.

(4) The research from here and abroad suggests that in comparison with men, women prefer a more structured learning environment and appreciate a curriculum which is more people-oriented than related to inanimate objects. There is some opinion that distance learning techniques, unsupported by tutorial contact, are not appropriate for those students who may have been confined to a home base for some time. Contact with people is important to help them overcome the feelings of isolation which many report. Students themselves identified contact with people as being one of the most beneficial aspects of bridging courses and most of the courses were found to incorporate opportunities for students to meet socially.

(5) Formal teaching strategies were not felt to be beneficial to mature students' needs in mixed ability groupings; the methods employed by tutors on bridging courses included informal talks, group discussions,and resource-based individual assignments with as much individual attention being given to students as the often limited time would allow. NOW-course tutors, particularly, tried to provide a welcoming environment for their course. Although both types of course place an emphasis on study and/or communication skills, the students in the sample indicated that they would have

liked even more help with these problems and a considerable number wished for more group discussions.

(6) The materials used on RTS courses varied from published course books to simple hand-outs and work sheets compiled by tutors themselves. On RTW courses tutors made use of some of the guides for returners mentioned in Appendix 2, locally-produced written information often brought by visiting speakers and occasionally self-assessment test materials.

(7) Whatever their curricula it would seem that bridging courses are successful in raising women's confidence levels, although their increased confidence may be lost if there are no suitable follow-on opportunities available for them after the course ends.

(8) Counselling is considered important both in this country and abroad in helping bridging-course students to evaluate their interests and abilities and decide upon a future course of action. The research found that counselling is approached in a variety of ways. In most courses the course organiser acts as informal counsellor to the students and attempts to see new students on or before enrolment, although this is not always possible because of lack of time. Some bridging courses have either group or individual counselling built into the curriculum but there are few staff who have received training in counselling. One or two colleges, polytechnics and universities have special clinics geared to the needs of mature students, although these are few in number.

(9) In the United States a much greater emphasis is placed on the counselling aspect of bridging courses. Some American tutors believe that mature women should be counselled as to how to make best use of existing facilities within the colleges in preference to providing special courses. In some colleges in the United States, for instance, students are encouraged to spend time sampling different subject options within the mainstream curriculum whilst receiving counselling support. Other American tutors believe that young women should receive special counselling during periods of family commitment to prepare them for a later return to work or study.

(10) Students questioned during the research indicated that the bridging courses had not substantially changed their future study and/or career intentions or helped them with making decisions concerning these. These results may reflect the restricted curriculum of many courses already referred to and the need for more counselling and more specific and detailed information concerning opportunities. It may be, however, that there is not sufficient time for major changes in students' ideas and thinking to take place during an initial bridging course in which the weekly commitment is low.

(11) The new educational guidance services for adults have an important part to play in adult education and for some women visits to these may partially or wholly eliminate the need for a bridging course.

(12) Apart from the MSC-sponsored WOW courses, almost all other RTW courses for women offer a wholly college-based curriculum. In North America the RTW courses are much more likely to provide the opportunity of job sampling and work experience outside the college

environment. Job sampling is particularly necessary for informing women of non-traditional occupations about which most have little idea. The United States, Canada and Sweden have all run courses which include work experience within non-traditional settings and the Swedish scheme in Kristianstad County is reported to have been particularly successful.

6.3 Organisational Issues

(1) The RTS courses are usually taught by a team of lecturers with a senior tutor to provide continuity. One or two people only are usually involved with both the teaching and organisation of NOW-type courses.

(2) The NOW courses sometimes have particular problems because of their often being taught and organised by a single tutor who may be ill or leave, so causing the course to cease temporarily or permanently. Student numbers on NOW courses can also be a problem if there is inadequate advertisement, bad weather or strikes. Thirdly, because these courses are non-advanced and non-academic they may have a low priority within the college. Such reasons may account for the fact that some NOW-type courses do not necessarily run every year or even, if proposed, do not get off the ground.

(3) End qualifications and/or certificates appear to be offered by the more academic types of RTS opportunity whilst the NOW-type courses usually have neither. In most bridging courses the emphasis is placed on continuous assessment and project work rather than on examinations, which are viewed by some tutors as being inappropriate for mature students. Almost all RTS courses expect students to do a certain amount of homework.

(4) Record-keeping and follow-up procedures on the courses were variable; in the NOW-type courses these procedures were limited and rarely formalised. However, tutors were usually able to specify the drop-out rates associated with their courses. On the RTW opportunities studied student drop-out was reported to be low but on the RTS courses to vary from 25 to above 50 per cent. Tutors on both types of course had little information on how past students had fared since the course, other than that obtained from students writing to the college often because of their need for a reference.

(5) Fees on RTW courses tend to be consistently low (below £10 in 1979) but are higher and more variable amongst the RTS opportunities where sometimes the fee includes the cost of course materials. Evening RTS courses appear to be cheaper than daytime courses and science courses the most expensive of all. It seems that in areas with a number of opportunities there is something to be gained from students 'shopping around' for the least expensive course which is best suited to their needs.

(6) Part-time students appear to be financially self-reliant and pay all course costs out of their own or their spouse's income. Very few receive any help from the college or their local authority, although the colleges are often prepared to reduce or waive fees in cases of hardship. Relatively few students, however, admitted to having financial difficulties in meeting course fees.

(7) The two main organisational barriers to women taking part in bridging courses are lack of crèche provision and timetabling outside school hours. Although most colleges apparently would like to provide crèche facilities from 9.00 to 5.00 p.m. they are often constrained from doing so by the cost of implementing local

authority regulations. In some cases the crèche is available for only part of the day. Whilst most bridging courses do seem to timetable classes within school hours (or in the evening) in some instances there was not sufficient time after the course for students to collect children from school.

6.4 The Students

(1) The questionnaire results revealed that students attending bridging courses displayed the following characteristics:

(i) 54 per cent were in their thirties and 30 per cent in either their late twenties or early forties;

(ii) 60 per cent were married and 16 per cent separated, widowed or divorced;

(iii) 78 per cent had children;

(iv) 46 per cent were attending the course while their children were between the ages of 5 and 11 but a further 25 per cent had younger children;

(v) 66 per cent had left school at age 15 or 16 and 26 per cent had continued their studies into the sixth form;

(vi) 29 per cent had received some form of full-time further or higher education;

(vii) 77 per cent had attended part-time courses other than the present one at some point in their past;

(viii) 74 per cent possessed some kind of qualification although this usually consisted of no more than one or two 'O' levels, RSA certificates, typing or artistic qualifications;

(ix) 40 per cent were involved with a part- or even a 'full-time' job at the time of the course and 66 per cent had been in the past.

(2) There is some indication that the criticism that women attending the courses come from more favoured backgrounds is true. Few in the sample, however, were found to have qualifications of an academic kind or to have held jobs involving any degree of responsibility. Many had been involved in voluntary work or other social activities, suggesting that the commonly held belief that many women who attend bridging courses have led sheltered lives at home in the past is unrealistic.

(3) Different bridging courses attract students of varying personal and educational background. Most of the residential students in the sample, for instance, had worked up to the start of the course and a relatively high proportion were single without children.

(4) Most women reported that their family was supportive of their attending the course. However, it appears that they have a number of other personal problems related to the course which include lack of confidence, guilt about attending the course and worry over child-care problems, a tendency to cling to familiar ground both in discussions and in their approach to future jobs and study opportunities and unrealistic career aspirations in terms of the course fitting in with family commitments.

(5) The majority of students in the sample wished to start a further study or training course after the course ended, rather than proceed directly into work; equal numbers hoped to go on to further and higher education. Their study choices were mainly in the arts and social sciences. Of those who were able to identify a job or career for the future the vast majority chose very traditional occupations with very few mentioning either management or industry. Approximately even numbers wished to work full- or part-time.

(6) Although most bridging courses appear to have some kind of suitable follow-on courses available locally, few establishments provide a chain of educational provision which students can enter or leave at different points depending on their backgrounds and future intentions. Such facilities are commonly available within the United States where credit transfer schemes are a well-established part of the American educational system. The facility to gain credit for courses completed at one college which can then be built upon later in another place is of immense help to women with family commitments.

6.5 Recommendations

Whilst it is apparent that bridging courses have considerable success in providing women with an enjoyable educational experience, in helping them to return to study and to regain their confidence, it appears that they are less successful in effecting substantial changes in women's attitudes and study or career choices or in helping them with their decision-making in these areas. The report indicates that there are a number of developments which might help to improve the participation and progress of women on bridging courses and other Further Education opportunities. These are outlined in the following list of recommendations:

6.5.1 Curricular developments

(i) the provision of a more widely-based core curriculum of subjects within bridging courses which includes science and technology topics presented in an imaginative manner;

(ii) associated with (i), the more extensive harnessing of the resources of a wider range of college departments;

(iii) the more frequent use of successful women role models from both the academic and work environments;

(iv) the provision of more help for students with study skills difficulties;

(v) the greater availability of job-sampling opportunities within the RTW curriculum;

(vi) the development of adequate follow-up schemes to assess the effectiveness of bridging courses.

A major draw-back of some bridging courses appears to be the narrowness of the curriculum on offer with the result that women students are often not sufficiently informed of, or prepared for, the full range of study and job opportunities which currently exists. Recommendations (i) to (v) suggest ways in which bridging-course curricula and women's aspirations might be widened. Before these or any other curricular changes are planned, however, it may be worthwhile for college tutors to develop simple follow-up schemes in order to gain a better idea of the effectiveness of their existing bridging-course provision (Recommendation (vi)).

6.5.2 Changes to information and support services

(vii) the improvement of course advertisement and outreach activities by tutors so as to spread news of the opportunities to potential students;

(viii) the introduction of 'gate-keeper' training for those manning switchboards and information desks;

(ix) the support for, and improvement of, local counselling and educational advisory services for adults;

(x) the careful assessment of the counselling needs of students, the provision of more time for counselling within the bridging-course curriculum and the increased involvement of college careers staff with bridging courses.

Research has indicated that the potential student population of bridging courses is latent; adult women in particular are not often aware that local bridging opportunities exist. The study suggests that even if they have heard of such a course they may encounter difficulty in seeking out further information from the relevant college. Once embarked upon a course, women students may not receive sufficient help to make an informed choice from all possible further study and job/career opportunities. Recommendations (vii) to (x) are concerned with improving existing support and counselling services. Where such services exist it can be seen that they have been achieved more as a result of goodwill and cooperation amongst those concerned than by any substantial financial provision.

6.5.3 Organisational improvements

(xi) the participation of at least two members of staff in the organisation and/or teaching of bridging courses to ensure continuity if one is absent;

(xii) the introduction of some form of training for intending bridging-course tutors;

(xiii) the promotion of links between colleges offering bridging courses and institutions of higher education and an exploration of the possibility of establishing some form of credit transfer;

(xiv) the introduction and/or improvement of college crèche facilities;

(xv) the timetabling of more courses within school hours and the introduction of increased flexibility generally into the course and the college organisation.

The organisational improvements suggested are aimed at ensuring continuity of bridging-course provision in terms of there being sufficient numbers of experienced staff made available to teach and organise the courses (Recommendations (xi) and (xii)), in terms of suitable follow-on courses being arranged (Recommendation (xiii)) and lastly in terms of adequate student numbers being achieved (Recommendations (xiv) and (xv)). One means of helping to ensure a consistently good take-up by women of bridging and other courses is for colleges to make a greater allowance for the fact that many women may have child care and other domestic responsibilities to contend with at the same time as studying aspirations and commitments.

APPENDIX I

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1-5

National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales

The Mere, Upton Park, Slough, Berks. SL1 2DQ

BRIDGING COURSES FOR WOMEN PROJECT

College ....

Course Title ....

Name ....

Sex .... Male ☐ ...... Female ☐

The project is concerned with the working of courses run within Colleges of Further Education and Polytechnics which are designed for women who, after an absence, would like to return to work or to further study or training. In this questionnaire we are interested in the views and intentions of those of you attending such a course. It would be a great help to us if you could answer as frankly as possible, on the understanding that all information which you provide will be strictly confidential.

Please indicate your answers by either ticking the appropriate box or writing in the space provided.

THE COURSE

	More than one box may be ticked	NFER Use
1. How did you learn of the course?		
a) From friends	☐	6
b) From the College prospectus	☐	7
c) From a special course leaflet	☐	8
d) From a poster	☐	9
e) From an advert in the local paper	☐	10
f) From an article in the local paper	☐	11
g) From a local radio programme	☐	12
h) Other, please give details	☐	13

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☐☐☐☐☐

NFER Use

2. How are you enjoying the course?

Please tick
one box only

very much	☐
all right	☐
not very much	☐

14

3. What do you find most valuable in the course?

....

....

....

15-16

4. What do you find least valuable in the course?

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17-18

5. Is there anything that you would like to see given more time to or included in the course if not already present?

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19-20

6. What, if anything, do you find is the most difficult part of the course?

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21-22

NFER Use

Please tick one of four boxes (1) to (4) to indicate your answer to each topic

7. What are your views about the amount of time given to:

	(1) Too much	(2) About right	(3) Too little	(4) N/A*	NFER Use
a) Job related lectures?	☐	☐	☐	☐	23
b) Lectures on further study courses?	☐	☐	☐	☐	24
c) Cultural topics such as art, literature and music?	☐	☐	☐	☐	25
d) Maths, science and technical topics?	☐	☐	☐	☐	26
e) Counselling?	☐	☐	☐	☐	27

*N/A = Not Applicable

8. What are your views about the amount of time given to:

	(1) Too much	(2) About right	(3) Too little	(4) N/A*	NFER Use
a) Lecturing?	☐	☐	☐	☐	28
b) Written work?	☐	☐	☐	☐	29
c) Discussions?	☐	☐	☐	☐	30
d) Practical work?	☐	☐	☐	☐	31
e) Homework?	☐	☐	☐	☐	32
f) Other, please give details	☐	☐	☐	☐	33

*N/A = Not Applicable

9. While attending the course have you been counselled on personal or careers matters? Yes ☐ No ☐ 34

If YES, please give details of when, where and by whom.

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.... 35-37

....

Did you find the counselling helpful? Yes ☐ No ☐ 38

NFER Use

10. What are your views on the length of the course?

Please tick one box only

		NFER Use
too long	☐	
about right	☐	39
too short	☐	

If you think that the course is either TOO LONG or TOO SHORT, what changes would you suggest?

.... 40-41

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11. Do you find the course hours convenient?

Yes	No	NFER Use
☐	☐	42

If NO, how could they be timed to suit you better?

....

.... 43-44

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12. Do you feel that the course has helped you in any of the following ways?

Please tick YES or NO in EVERY case.

Please tick YES or NO

	Yes	No	NFER Use
a) In making new friends	☐	☐	45
b) By increasing your confidence	☐	☐	46
c) In getting out of a rut at home	☐	☐	47
d) In re-organising your life	☐	☐	48
e) In decision making	☐	☐	49
f) In getting back into the way of studying	☐	☐	50
g) By improving your ability to study	☐	☐	51
h) By providing information on further study, training and job opportunities	☐	☐	52
i) By encouraging you to go on to further study & training	☐	☐	53
j) By broadening your job/career ambitions	☐	☐	54
k) In making a realistic study/career choice	☐	☐	55
l) In anything else, please give details	☐	☐	56

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NFER Use

INTENTIONS

13. What was/were your main reason/s for attending the course? 57-58

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14. What do you intend to do after the course ends?

More than one box may be ticked

			NFER Use
a)	Get a job	☐	59
b)	Change jobs	☐	60
c)	Remain in same job	☐	61
d)	Start a further study course	☐	62
e)	Start a training course	☐	63
f)	Remain at home for the present	☐	64
g)	Stay at home, don't want a job	☐	65
h)	Not sure	☐	66
i)	Other, please give details	☐	67

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15. Do you have a particular job or career in mind?

Yes	No	NFER Use
☐	☐	68

If YES, please give details. 69-70

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16. In the future, do you wish to work:

Please tick one box only

			NFER Use
a)	Full time?	☐	
b)	Part time?	☐	71
c)	Don't plan to work?	☐	

79-80/01

☐☐☐☐☐ 1-5

NFER Use

17. Has the present course changed your job/career intentions in any way?

Yes	No
☐	☐

6

If YES, please say how.

....

....

.... 7-8

....

....

If NO, is this because:

More than one box may be ticked

a) You knew what job or career you wanted before you came to the course? ☐ 9

b) The course has not provided you with any new job/career ideas? ☐ 10

c) Other reason/s? ☐ 11
If so, please give details

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18. If you intend to go on to a further study or training course, please give details.

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.... 12-13

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Is the MAIN reason that you wish to attend this further study or training course:

Please tick one box only

a) Because it will help you in your intended job or career? ☐

b) Because it will help your general job/career prospects? ☐

c) For interest only? ☐ 14

d) Some other reason/s? ☐
If so, please give details

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☐☐☐☐☐

FINANCE AND TRAVEL

NFER Use

19. From what source/s does the money for your course FEES come?

More than one box may be ticked

a) Your own income ☐ 15

b) Your husband/wife ☐ 16

c) Friend or other relative ☐ 17

d) A grant from your local education authority ☐ 18

e) The College ☐ 19

f) Other, please give details ☐ 20

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20. Do you receive assistance from any of the following sources towards OTHER expenses incurred in attending the course? (e.g. for travelling, meals, books, etc.)

More than one box may be ticked

a) Your local education authority ☐ 21

b) The College ☐ 22

c) Other, please give details ☐ 23

....

....

21. By what means are your LIVING expenses covered while you attend the course?

More than one box may be ticked

a) Part time work ☐ 24

b) Other personal income ☐ 25

c) Husband/wife ☐ 26

d) Friend or other relative ☐ 27

e) Grant from your local education authority ☐ 28

f) The College ☐ 29

g) Other means, please give details ☐ 30

....

....

NFER Use

22. Please would you tick the appropriate box to indicate whether you are a PART TIME or FULL TIME student. 31

PART TIME	
FULL TIME	

23. If you are a PART TIME student, please estimate how much it costs you EACH WEEK to attend the course.

Please consider here ALL expenses (fees, travelling, meals, child minder, books, etc.) which you have to meet out of YOUR OWN/FAMILY's earnings.

32-33

24. Have you had any difficulty in covering the costs of attending the course? (including fees, living and other expenses)

Yes	No

34

If YES, please comment below.

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.... 35-36

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Please tick one box only

25. How long does it USUALLY take you to travel to College?

less than ¼ hour	
¼ to ½ hour	
½ to 1 hour	
over 1 hour	

37

Do you often have travelling difficulties?

Yes	No

38

☐☐☐☐☐

NFER Use

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please tick one box only in the following questions

26. Please would you tick the appropriate box to indicate your marital status.

Single ☐
Married ☐
Separated ☐ 39
Divorced ☐
Widowed ☐

27. Please tick the appropriate box to indicate the age group to which you belong.

Age Group (Years)	
20 - 24	☐
25 - 29	☐
30 - 34	☐
35 - 39	☐
40 - 49	☐
50 - 59	☐
60 or over	☐

40

28. Have you any children?

Yes	No
☐	☐

41

If YES, please tick the appropriate box to indicate the number of children.

Number of children

1	2	3	4+
☐	☐	☐	☐

42

What is the age of the youngest child LIVING with you?

Age (years)	
less than 2	☐
2 - 4	☐
5 - 11	☐
12 - 16	☐
over 16	☐

43

☐☐☐☐☐

NFER Use

29. If you have children below school age LIVING with you, who usually cares for them while you attend College?

More than one box may be ticked

a) Husband or wife ☐ 44

b) Friend or other relative ☐ 45

c) Child minder ☐ 46

d) Playgroup ☐ 47

e) Nursery school ☐ 48

f) Other, please give details ☐ 49

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....

What does this cost you, if anything, PER WEEK? ☐ 50-51

30. How easily does attending the course fit in with your other commitments? (e.g. housework, work, leisure)

Please tick one box only

very easily	☐
easily	☐
some difficulty	☐
much difficulty	☐

52

If you are experiencing SOME or MUCH DIFFICULTY, please give details below.

....

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53-54

31. In what ways do you feel that the family is giving you either encouragement or discouragement with the course?

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55-56

NFER Use

32. Please, if applicable, give your husband's or wife's occupation. 57

....

Please tick YES or NO to the following questions

33. Are you PRESENTLY engaged in PAID work? Yes ☐ No ☐ 58

If YES, please give details and say whether the work is full or part time.

....

....

If NO, have you EVER been engaged in PAID work before the present? Yes ☐ No ☐ 59

If so, please give details.

....

....

34. Are you PRESENTLY engaged in VOLUNTARY work? Yes ☐ No ☐ 60

If YES, please give details.

....

....

If NO, have you EVER been engaged in VOLUNTARY work before the present? Yes ☐ No ☐ 61

If so, please give details.

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....

35. Are you PRESENTLY engaged in any other ACTIVITY outside the home? (e.g. drama groups, evening classes, social activities) Yes ☐ No ☐ 62

If YES, please give details.

....

....

If NO, have you EVER been engaged in any other ACTIVITY outside the home before the present? Yes ☐ No ☐ 63

If so, please give details.

....

....

NFER Use

36. Have you given up a job to attend the course? 64

Yes	No
☐	☐

Please tick one box only

37. If you are not working at the present time, how many years has it been since you were LAST in PAID work? 65

Years out of paid work	
less than 1	☐
1 - 3	☐
4 - 9	☐
10 - 15	☐
never worked	☐

Please tick YES or NO in each case

38. Are you currently receiving:

	Yes	No	
a) Unemployment benefit?	☐	☐	66
b) Supplementary benefit?	☐	☐	67
c) Any other benefit (e.g. maternity?) Please give details.	☐	☐	68

....

....

Please tick one box only

39. At what age did you leave school? 69

Age left school	
13	☐
14	☐
15	☐
16	☐
over 16	☐

40. Have you ever attended a College or University FULL TIME? 70

Yes	No
☐	☐

If YES, please give details.

....

....

....

NFER Use

41. Have you ever attended, or are you attending, evening classes or part time classes other than the present?

Yes	No

71

If YES, please give details.

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....

42. Have you ever undertaken training OTHER than at a College or University?

Yes	No

72

If YES, please give details.

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43. Do you possess any qualifications? e.g. degrees, certificates, diplomas. (O, A-levels, CSE, City and Guilds, RSA, ONC, HND, etc.)

Yes	No

73

If YES, please give details.

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GENERAL

79-80/02

44. If you have any additional comments on the course content and organisation, please comment below.

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NFER Use

45. Is there anything which you feel has particularly helped or hindered your taking part in the course?

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APPENDIX TWO

GUIDES FOR WOMEN RETURNERS

(i) 'Fresh Start - a guide for women on how and where to train for a new job', EOC (1979)

(ii) 'Equal Opportunities - a careers guide for women and men' Miller (1978)

(iii) 'Second Chance Education', Miller (1979)

(iv) 'Returners - some notes for those returning to employment later in life or considering training for a new career', National Advisory Centre on Careers for Women (1975)

(v) 'Happy Return', Korving (1976)

(vi) 'A Guide to Books for the Mature Job Changer', COIC (undated)

(vii) 'Career Change', Lancashire and Holdsworth (1976)

(viii) 'Back to Work - a practical guide for women', Moulder and Sheldon (1979)

(ix) 'Second Chances for Adults - your guide to all kinds of education and training opportunities 1979-80' Pates and Good (1979)

(x) 'A Woman's Choice - a guide to decision making', Cammaert and Larson (1979)

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